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Reformed Christians consider China's Reforming churches

Part I: At the crossroads of a changing China

Ron Rupke

Mission-minded Christians around the globe have their sights on China these days. How astonishing to see one of the world's most ancient and inward-looking civilizations transformed in the new millennium as an emerging superpower! How wonderful to watch the explosive growth of the Christian church, and the urban house church movement, in this officially atheistic nation!

Two young Presbyterian friends drew together many Reformed China workers at a major conference in January 2013. Bruce Baugus and Dave Holmlund developed a friendship of common interests as they pursued separate graduate study programs in a shared office in the Calvin Seminary library from 2002 to 2007. They both loved Reformed teaching and practice, and each had a keen interest in church developments in China. They began to ask each other, "What do we Christians in the Reformed tradition have to offer the new church God is growing in the world's most populous nation? How can we work together to meet the tremendous need in China?"

By September 2011, the friends made a bold decision: they would organize a conference to bring together Reformed Christians active in Chinese outreach! They set the conference date for January 2013, and divided the preparation tasks between them as they went back to their separate careers. Dr. Bruce Baugus, who is a professor at the Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) in Mississippi, persuaded RTS to administer the conference



This popular Bible, the Chinese Union Version (based on the ERV), has been legal in China for decades.



Conference members discuss the new growth of a uniquely Chinese Christianity.

funds and to serve as the official sponsor. Baugus and Holmlund – who pastors an Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) congregation in New Hampshire – agreed that since this was a churchly event, they would do their fundraising

through interested congregations. They found a large OPC church near Washington D.C. to serve as the conference host, and then they invited NAPARC churches (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council of churches) to

send representatives. They contacted seminaries associated with those churches; they approached active missionaries in mainland China. The contacts network grew as they worked, soon extending to translators, publishers, cultural

agencies, on-line seminaries and a large diaspora of young ethnic Chinese Christians.

Have passion, will travel

By December 2012, my friend Wybe Bylsma had learned about the conference and decided that he had to be there. Anyone who knows Wybe could understand the attraction; Wybe has spent a lifetime promoting a Reformed world and life view (for a feature interview with Wybe, see page 20). Wybe needed a traveling companion for the long trip to the Washington D.C. area, which is how I entered the conference catchment. We learned that registration at this three-day-long conference was free of charge – thanks to the spon-

See China's Christians on p. 2

The gospel in a post-Christian, Facebook world

Mike Wagenman

I recently spoke to a group of university students who were student leaders in on-campus Christian chaplaincies. One of the provocative questions I put before them was: Who are you? During the emerging adulthood years, years filled with formative experiences and significant transitions, it is helpful to reflect on who one is and is becoming. Am I becoming more like Christ or more like my cultural context?

What would happen if we all stood in front of the mirror and asked who that person was reflected back at us? To put it more

challengingly, if we imagined ourselves standing before the heavenly throne, asking who we resemble, would the answer come back to us, "You remind me of my Son"?

Historically, the formation of our identities has been one of the church's most important ministries. Through worship, catechesis, service and a host of other means, the church has seen itself as a place of human identity formation.

The church hasn't done this alone or in isolation, though. The church along with the family, the community, craft guilds and other civic institutions have all worked in tandem to raise whole



Social media has replaced the church's role in shaping our identities.

and integrated individuals who knew how to live in community. These institutions powerfully and persuasively shaped people so that they knew who they were and how they fit into the larger



See Gospel on p. 2

News

China's Christians *continued*

sorship by churches – but all registrants had to provide a pastor or elder's reference as proof of their attachment to a Reformed church and adherence to Reformed confessions. Although Wybe and I are both members of a Christian Reformed Church – a denomination that was ejected from the NAPARC in 1997 – the conference organizers accepted our pastoral references.

We spent New Years Day 2013 traveling the 1000 km route from Cobourg, Ont. to Baltimore, Md. En route, we made an important visit with a young Chinese professor Wybe had met in China, who was now a visiting professor and graduate student in marketing at the University of Syracuse. This young man welcomed us like old friends into the student residence where he lived with his wife, infant son and mother-in-law. Wybe soon steered our conversation to the big questions: did his friend still believe that Mao was good for China? (Yes). Did his friend know that a Christian worldview changes everything, including the way a market economy works? (It turned out that his friend is working out new ideas for "eastern marketing," based on ancient tao philosophy.) Our visit ended with a Chinese-style luncheon prepared by our friend's wife, and his gift of a large package of Chinese tea! By early afternoon we were back on the road.

As Wybe drove the long miles, I read aloud from a recent book written by a secular Chinese journalist, Liao Yiwu. His amazing 2011 volume titled *God is Red* tells the secret story of how Christianity survived and flourished in communist China following the 1949 expulsion of all foreign missionaries. After presenting many stories of unwavering dedication, hardship, perseverance and faith the author concludes,



Rev. Holmlund, Mrs. Fulton, Virginia Yip, Dr. Fulton and Dr. Baugus (clockwise from left).

"there is now a new Christian identity that is distinctively Chinese." Liao's stories provided an excellent introduction to the three-day conference we were about to join.

Not knowing where we were going or what we would find there, we showed up early on Jan. 2, 2013 for the opening of the three-day-long conference called *China's Reforming Churches*. We found a modern, cathedral-styled Presbyterian Church located on the edge of the University of Maryland campus. Inside the versatile worship area more than 100 chairs had been set up lecture-hall style facing a podium flanked by large projection screens. A room divider covered with an enormous map of China bisected the room. Behind the screen early arrivers helped themselves to coffee, tea, juice and pastries in a space conducive to around-the-table conversations.

As the room began to fill with registrants, we noticed that many were young and visibly ethnic Chinese. My friend Wybe was in his element here; he struck up conversations and soon merged into a group of Westminster Seminary students and graduates. This group became our social cluster for the duration of the conference and after-hours get-togethers. We discovered they hailed from many different places: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, mainland China and even the U.S.A. Most were fluently bilingual, a definite advantage at this conference, even though translation services were provided throughout.

After opening remarks and devotions, the president of ChinaSource Dr. Brent Fulton made the first presentation. The China Source organization was founded in 1997 to provide accurate information to the faith community about China and its churches. Dr. Fulton spoke about the size and complexity of China, and cautioned us against drawing conclusions based on the testimony or anecdotes of one or two witnesses. He made four major points: that the church in China is growing, and may number as many as 100 million believers. It is diverse, with devoted Christians worshipping in government-recognized Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches, as well as traditional rural house churches and new unregistered urban churches. Christianity has not been illegal in China since 1982, and though policy has not changed since then, practice has, to the point of a sea change for Christian activity. ➤

Ron Rupke lives in Cobourg, Ont. Part II of this series on Reformed Churches in China will run in the next issue of CC, March 25.

**Gospel** *continued***Identity givers**

And then a number of rapid technological changes and ideological movements swept through Western civilization with significant consequences for personal identity. The formation of nation-states and nationalistic zeal, the industrial, scientific and digital revolutions, as well as the Enlightenment, Liberal and postmodernist worldviews – these all resulted in the rearranging and re-prioritization of the pre-modern institutionally-based society. Possibly the most underappreciated result for us today is the disintegration of Christendom and the crumbling influence of the church in personal identity formation. Now, compared with even a generation or two ago, human desires, fears and assumptions are formed through associations of personal choice and are quite limited in their longevity. Today, answering the question "Who am I?" can result in a fascinating diversity even within a relatively close-knit group of people, depending on the histories and choices of each person.

The great 20th century American theologian, Paul Tillich, once said that there are three possible sources of understanding one's self or identity: first, an identity obtained from others (what he called "Heteronomous selfhood"); second, an identity obtained from one's self (what he called "Autonomous selfhood"); or third, an identity obtained from God (what he called "Theonomous selfhood").

In Ancient and pre-Modern times, most people's identity was shaped theologically – by God through the church and reinforced through other supportive institutions within Christendom. Beginning with the Enlightenment up until very recently, Modern people received their sense of self from themselves – the self-made person who followed in the footsteps of the cultural heroes of those who rose "from rags to riches" by their own determination, skill and hard work. With the advent of the technological revolution and the widespread availability of social media, many of our contemporaries' selfhood is obtained through the messages they receive from their peers – from others that surround them



More like Christ, or more like our cultural context?

in popular culture, the media or social networks to which they belong. Today, in the twilight of Christendom, the formative role of the church has been diminished (at best) compared with Facebook, for example, through which each person constructs and manages the public presentation of their self.

Marketing ourselves

I've reviewed these interesting historical and cultural developments in order to ask a very real ministry question: How does the church as a cultural institution, living within a culture which marginalizes faith, help people move from a self constructed from others through the media or social networks to a self that is from God and that can really only be received as a gift? To put the question another way: When the majority (or at least large swaths) of the culture understands selfhood to be something one constructs from one's peers and through one's own marketing strategy,

how does the church equip people to swim courageously against this cultural current and to reach a place where the imagination is open to the presence of God who desires to graciously give to us an identity (a self) rooted in Christ – especially when church membership is voluntary and not culturally supported by many other institutions?

Let me push the question: Since the youth and young adults of today are the general population of tomorrow, what's the future of the church like when the percentage of the population that's interested in religious or spiritual matters (understood in a traditionally Christian way) is on the rapid decrease? What does ministry look like when the dominant culture around us is post-Christian?

A meaningful message

Each of us will respond to these challenges uniquely. My guess is that for most, our responses will generally resemble either dread or excitement. And if we are a church leader, how we respond to the decline of Christianity in society will shape how we exercise our leadership within our congregations. If we look at the future of the North American church with fear, we might ramp up the legalistic and moralistic pressure we exert on people to conform to our specific ideals of Christian living. If we look to the future with certainty, we might turn to gimmicks and gurus to help us strategize and manage "slick" or "entertaining" forms of ministry to attract as much attention as possible so that we can be on the "cutting edge" of the next new thing God is doing.

Either way, the church as a cultural institution will need to be spending the next number of years (or decades) thinking theologically about what these cultural shifts mean for its ministry going forward. One particular way in which this could take concrete shape is in the area of the church's preaching ministry. In a Christendom culture, in which the institutional church had a widely-agreed upon place of prominence, preaching could connect with people's guilt

See *Gospel* on p. 3

News

Historic encounter of two Reformed denominations



Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church in Welland, Ont. is within both Classis Niagara and the Presbytery of Niagara.

Bert Witvoet

WELLAND, Ont. – A new day may be dawning in the ecumenical relationship between two Canadian denominations that until now have mostly lived apart. Delegates to the February 20 meeting of Classis Niagara of the Christian Reformed Church joined delegates to the Niagara presbytery meeting of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in a joint service that included communion. The event took place in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Welland, where both bodies held their regional meetings at different times. Delegates were encouraged to attend each other's regional meetings.

The event followed upon the official recognition of closer ties between the Presbyterian Church and the Christian Reformed Church in Canada expressed in the Affirmation of Relationships document,

which was adopted by the PCC General Assembly in 2009 and the CRC Synod of 2010. This statement recognizes that the two denominations have already worked together in areas of church education curricula, Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ecumenical ministries. It acknowledges that both denominations share "a Reformed theological perspective and a Presbyterian form of church government." It commits the two denominations to more frequently engage in shared ministries, sharing of personnel and exchange of visitors.

A perfect fit

The respective planners and ecumenical relations officers, Rev. Stephen Kendall of the PCC and Rev. William Koopmans of the CRC, looked for an area in Canada where the geographical boundaries of a classis and presbytery would ap-

proximately coincide and where the size of each body would allow for a joint gathering. According to Koopmans, "Classis Niagara and the Presbytery of Niagara seemed the perfect fit, and we were delighted that both sides were enthusiastic to make such a meeting happen."

Rev. James Dekker of Covenant CRC observed that the PCC has a longer history in Canada than the CRC, "so we in the CRC can continue to learn from them . . . how to relate in the Canadian public square more effectively and Christianly." He wondered if there is not room "for joining forces in aboriginal ministries where both communities have worshiping congregations?"

Although the Niagara encounter is a historic first, the PCC and the CRC have been in discussion since the 1970s, said Koopmans. "In the last decade those discussions became deeper and more intentional." He expressed the hope that this Niagara first "will lead to opportunities of worshiping together at the local levels as well as collaboration in service and outreach projects."

James Dekker enthusiastically reported that all attendees "were given mighty cool brown pottery mugs with the burning bush logo of the PCC and the cross imposed on the triangle logo of the CRC as keepsakes. I normally don't appreciate 'swag' that much, but this is indeed a suitable moment to remember at least with morning coffee."

Gospel continued

and point them to a Saviour who forgives and saves from the threat of punishment after death. Preaching could also issue legalistic instructions about how to live a socially-acceptable life, which was buttressed by other cultural institutions. Legalistic or moralistic preaching that flows from fear – as well as self-assured consumeristic preaching that flows from certainty – both assume that the surrounding culture has an inherent Christian sense of guilt and expectation.

But in a post-Christian culture, guilt is rare, death isn't greatly feared and legalistic instructions which do not conform to personal preference can very easily be ignored. And in a post-Christian culture, there is little certainty that the future will be any better than the monotony of the present. Rather, in a post-Christian culture, the foundational questions are whether there is meaning and purpose to life, whether there really is anything worth living for, whether justice can ever prevail, and whether there is anything captivating enough to pull me away from my fascination with myself.

The gospel must sound like good news for those whose self seems next to worthless. When the church engages in preaching that wrestles with these sorts of questions, it will be tracking with the existential struggles of those outside her walls. But it will also be discerning an authentic response to the gospel for the church's own inner life and identity in a post-Christian world today.

Mike Wagenman is the Director of The Kuyper Centre for Emerging Scholars (kuypercenter.ca) at Western University.



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Scottish and Dutch connections

CRCNA

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PCC

Enjoying a strong Scottish connection, we also celebrate the many in our congregations who come from across the globe. Weekly worship is experienced in Hungarian, Ukrainian, Ghanaian, Arabic, First Nations, Chinese and Korean congregations.

We include just under one thousand congregations across Canada, with a membership of 103,400.

– Taken from the pamphlet "Celebrating Our Relationship."



Stephen Kendall and William Koopmans handed out mugs to all the delegates.



Delegates receive communion.

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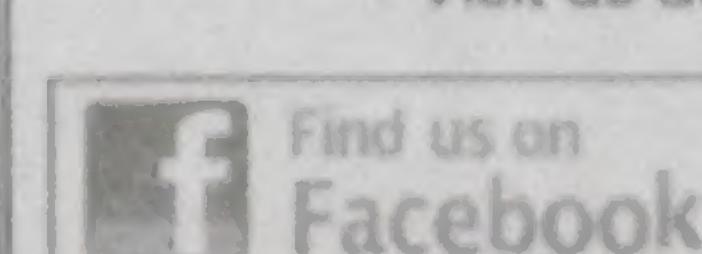
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Editorials

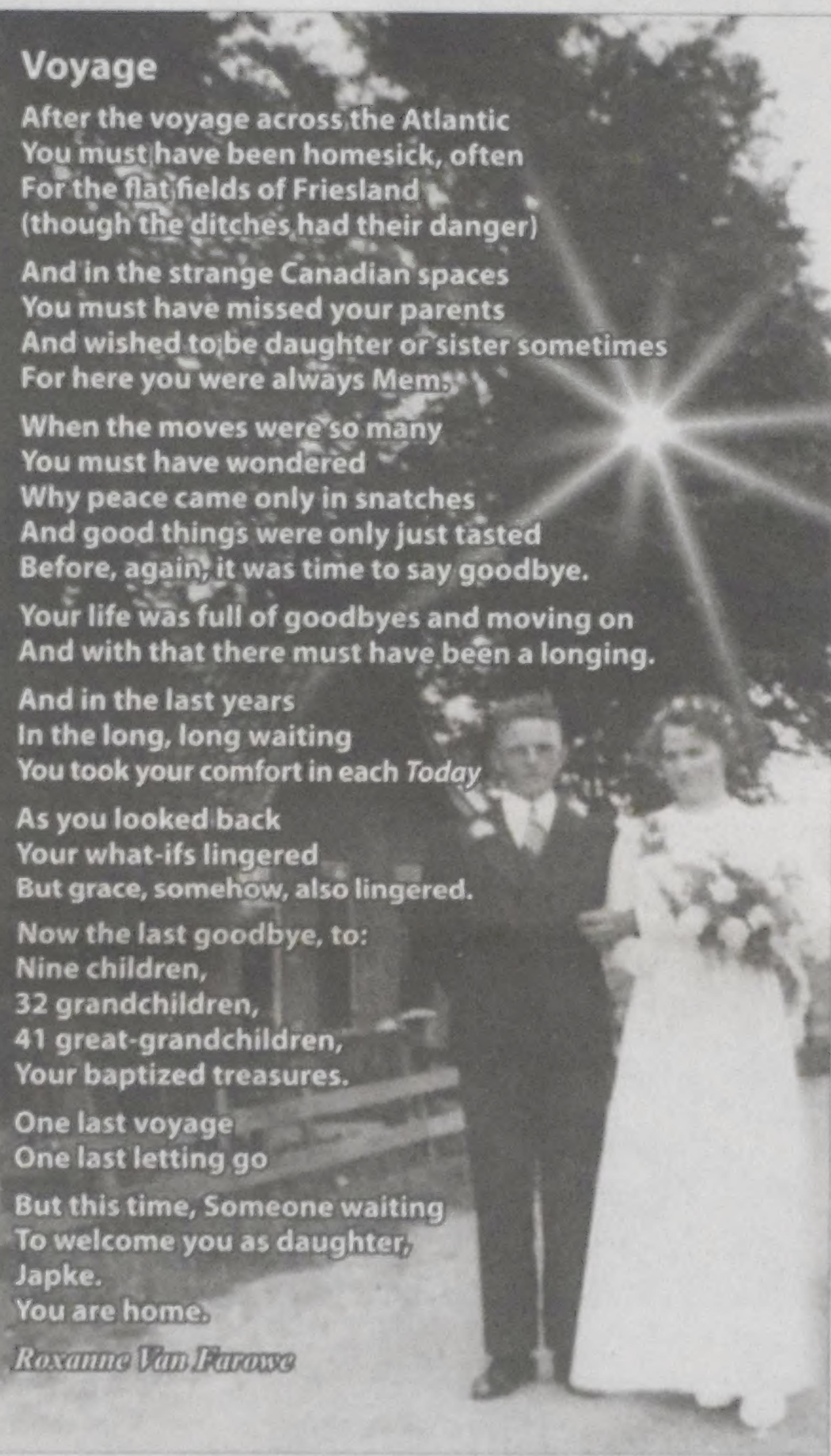
An inheritance of grace

Angela Reitsma Bick

The nurses called her Jackie, which always sounded funny. She was *Mem* to all nine children. When a new Canadian neighbour laughed at her unusual Frisian name, she told her husband fiercely, "Never say my name here again." She became Jacqueline.



Over the 58 years she subscribed to CC, both paper and recipient changed names; lately, her mailing label read "Mrs. J. Vanderhoek-Reitsma."



To 32 grandchildren, including me, she was *Beppe*. Great-grandkids knew her as *Beppe II*.

But the strongest part of her identity was always as a child of God. This tough woman, my grandmother, lay in the hospital for seven days before God called her home on January 21, 2013.

While she was there, her recently translated memoirs were sent to the whole family. Imagine grandkids from Vancouver to Quebec City, from Seattle to Jersey City . . . all seeing her life in print when it had only been a series of bedtime stories before. Strength of character and faith in God pour from the pages of this gift to us, her descendants.

Some of my sisters and I started reading her life story at bedtime to our kids. We want them to understand how God worked in her life and upheld the Reitsma family through some seriously hard times. This is not your usual immigrant narrative about arriving with nothing, settling down and then prospering. This story includes arriving with nothing, being constantly uprooted and struggling, for years, to keep afloat.

In the end, she titled her life story (stubbornly? joyfully?) *I am Japke*.

Trusting providence

She would have been 95 this week, but Beppe fell gravely ill on January 14. My husband, kids and I tried to visit her at the hospital, where all nine of her children and their spouses had gathered. My next-generation grief paled in comparison. God had drawn out her last years and filled them with family: the faithful daily visits of children; grandchildren popping by to introduce their children, until the names of that third generation began to blur.

"I think Beppe is one step from the finish line," my daughter whispered after seeing her in the hospital. Twelve hours later that line was crossed, and I kept thinking of the words of one of her favourite songs, "The Holy City."

*Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Sing for the night is o'er!
Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna for evermore.*

"Why did we emigrate?" her memoirs ask at one point. "Materially, we were nowhere. But spiritually we had gained." Our hearts reveal what we treasure, and hers were safe from thieves and moths and rust. That kind of eternal perspective and unshakeable trust in God's goodness was passed down to me, and with God's grace I hope to live it out for our children.

When the first grandchild was born, she notes that the couple "received" a baby girl. I've never heard anyone else use that verb. To see every child as a gift sent directly from God, and our only job to receive it.

I am Japke has left more than her life story. She has 81 living memoirs on this earth. Citing Romans 8, Beppe emphasizes that no earthly hardship can separate the Reitsmas from the love of God.

"In fact," she wrote, "he gives us strength in the difficulties of life." That's an inheritance worth claiming. ▶

Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of Christian Courier.

Lean on God

Nick Loenen

Mirrors reveal. They reveal what we are really like, not what we think we are like.

Reading the history of the Reformed faith in Holland is like a mirror, revealing parts of what shaped me. Not all of it is fit to boast about. In fact, boasting may be part of the problem. Agnes Amelink, religion reporter for the Dutch Christian daily, *Trouw*, traces the rise and decline of the Reformed and their unique contribution to state and society during the twentieth century in the Netherlands (*De Gereformeerden, Ooievaar*, Amsterdam, 2006).

Under the dynamic leadership of Abraham Kuyper, the Reformed people flourished during the first half of the century. They pursued education and achieved social mobility. They developed organizational competence leading to influence and power in education, media, commerce and politics. There was optimism. They shaped society. Christians could hold their own. They discovered that unbelief can be pushed back and more of life claimed for the Kingdom. Commitment to God, church and Kingdom seemed so sound, so healthy. But every paradise has its snake.

During the 1960s, however, much suddenly came undone. Loyalty to the church, its leadership, the strictly proscribed Reformed life-style, beliefs in eternal verities and truths, scriptural and doctrinal inerrancy, long-held sacred principles – all of it hit the skids. Clusters of the faithful in many places abandoned church and Kingdom causes, theology was rewritten and Christian ethics turned on its head.

Confident Christians

Why? Why this abrupt and complete collapse of faith and commitment among so many in such short order? Doubtless the reasons are many. One characteristic that marks the Dutch Reformed was noteworthy, however: their lack of modesty. To them God's will was no mystery. With astonishing certainty and self-assurance they made pronouncements on God's will, deciding what he approves or not. There was little humility. They had God wrapped up. They were God's mouthpiece and knew exactly what God wanted them to say.

Near century's end, journalist Amelink records from an interview, "I'll never believe that God walks around heaven bawling because we buy an ice cream on Sunday." [*Want ik geloof nooit dat God in de hemel loopt te janken omdat wij een ijsje nemen op zondag*]. Fifty years earlier, the parents of that same person would have declared with equal self-assurance God's eternal judgment on Sunday shoppers. No doubt about it! The Dutch Reformed knew it so well. Both belief and unbelief were stated and held in absolute terms. Such certainty has its appeal – no water in the wine! It is also frightening.

While reading about the lack of humility among Reformed leaders, culminating in the church split of 1944, I watched Spielberg's award-winning *Lincoln*. The contrast cannot be greater. In *Lincoln*, leadership of epic proportions and the virtue of deep humility met. How rare! He thought it audacious for mortals to pronounce on God's will with unrestrained self-assurance. Both sides in the Civil War claimed God for their cause. Lincoln shook his sad head and icily observed, "They

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Letters

Comment

Of oil and total depravity

Rick Boonstra

In an effort to balance the articles in your Jan. 28 issue on the "Idle No More" movement, allow me to point out a few things. I live in the Northern Gateway Corridor. For many years, I have watched and read about First Nations' living conditions, concerns and habits. I have seen many misuses of "Mother Earth," ignorance of creation and a disregard of it by the First Nations — many of them so ugly that to state them here forthrightly would be politically incorrect.

I have worked with First Nations, for them and employed them. Their nature is the same as mine — totally depraved. To point out repeatedly and exclusively the faults of "Second Nations" is really an expression of racism. We confess that we are all of common ancestry and of equal worth before God. We confess that all men are totally depraved. We confess that before God there is no First, Second or Third Nations. Yet we blindly write in *Christian Courier* as though there are two kinds of people who operate under different moral characters: one group being inclined to misuse creation because of total depravity and the other having a natural inclination to be good to the earth.

Exodus 20:5 (quoted in "Lessons from First Nations," by Ineke Medcalf-Strayer) applies equally to all people. God's revelation in creation does not show us our total depravity. We need something *special* to show us our condition and the remedy for it. We (all mankind) are too blind to see our condition through creation. That is why we call the Bible special revelation. I would argue that First Nations today often

display total depravity as strongly, if not proportionately stronger, than people with a remnant of Judeo Christian background. (For example, the greatest fuel spill in Northern Ontario was in Chief Teresa Spence's community at Attawapiskat.)

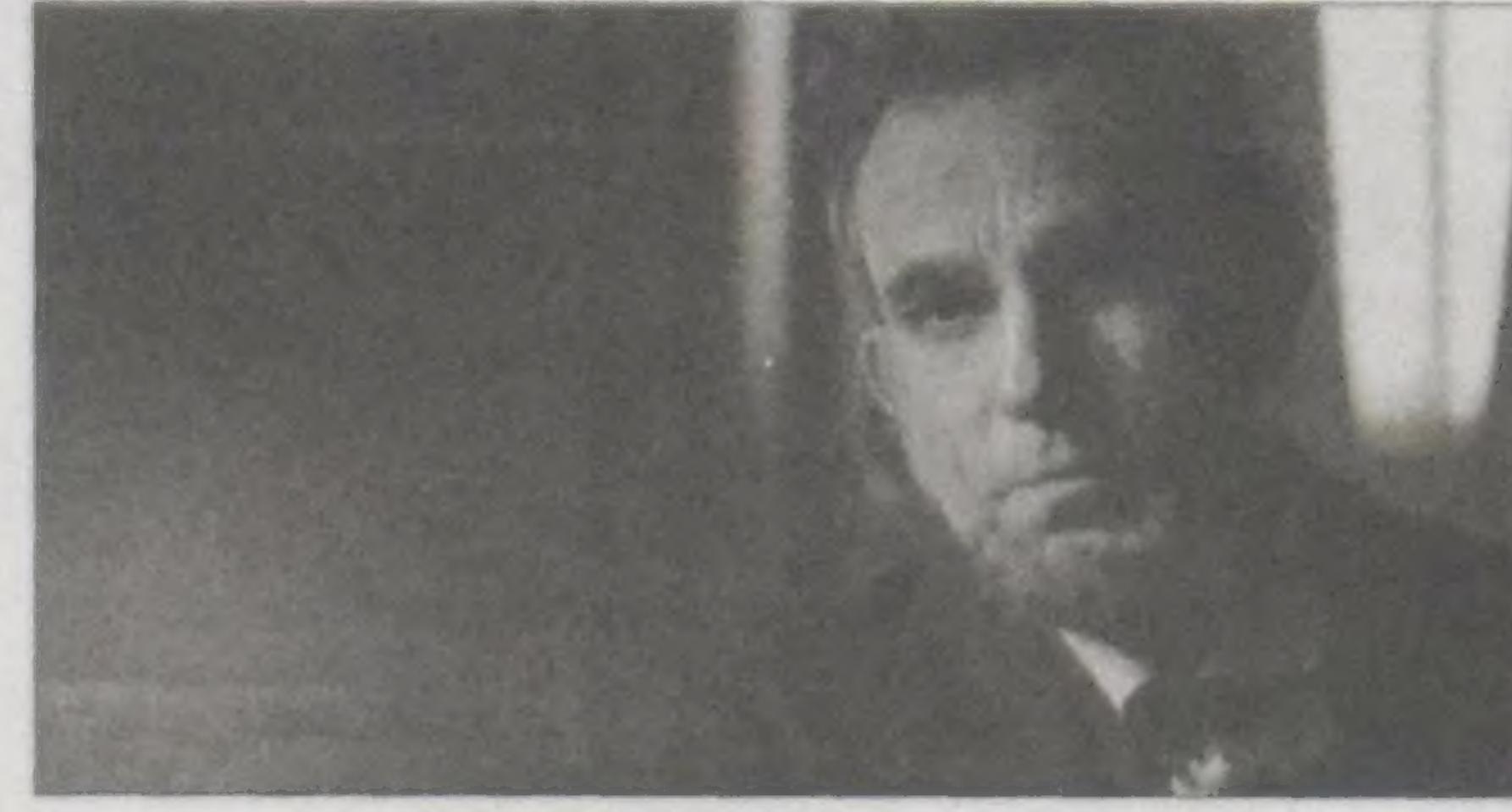
Stopping the pipeline won't save us

All men are without excuse and accountable for their behaviour — no matter what the circumstances. We can play the blame game like Adam (that woman made me do it) or Eve (the devil made me do it). The blame game will change neither the facts nor the results of our actions. Change starts with the recognition of our wrong action and confession of it. That applies to all men. As long as we deny this for one group or race and not the other, we are exercising some form of racism and enabling some to excuse their behaviour. We are in effect sitting idle. It is time to be idle no more and call a spade a spade. All men are totally depraved. Confession and repentance for all is the only way forward. Having a pipeline-less earth and a wonderful environment will not make us happy or save us. Rather, each person's acceptance and confession of his or her true condition will enable a change. To the point that we recognize this, only then can we influence progress. As redeemed people, we can use what God gives us in a stewardly fashion, and even go beyond this to begin to redeem creation. Trying to harness native spirituality and environmentalism to redeem people and the earth is doomed to fail.

Rick Boonstra lives in Quick, B.C.

Lean on God *continued*

can't both be right. One must be wrong. Both might be wrong." Lincoln is not just clever at logic, he was burdened, troubled at the task of discerning God's will. It overwhelmed Lincoln. How could he, a mortal, be certain of the will of the Almighty?



Lincoln never presumed his agenda was also God's.

Obedient surrender

Reluctance to claim God's unconditional support did not weaken Lincoln's leadership. He fought to the death for what he thought was right, as he had been given to see the right, in his words. But unlike the Reformed in Holland, Lincoln never presumed to speak for God or claim that his agenda was God's agenda. Always open to correction, he did not anoint himself and drape God's mantle over his own shoulders.

Had Lincoln-like humility prevailed among its leaders, would the history of the Reformed in Holland be less painful, more constructive, softened by love? As a child I learned to revere Reformed leaders, men of principle who fearlessly pronounced God's will for life, the men who spoke with great self-assurance about life's great mysteries.

What are we to think now? Perhaps, in that time and place, self-assurance about matters divine was the greatest strength of the Dutch Reformed and, sadly, also their deepest flaw. What is the lesson for us? Look in the mirror of history and strive to do God's will in humility, with love to all and malice to none! ▶

Nick Loenen lives in Richmond, B.C.



The story of 50 books

If one lives long enough, it seems at times as though life has come full circle. When we were in elementary school, my sisters, brother and I attended a country school with grades 1 through 8 all in one room, taught by one teacher. I loved that little school because there was a kitchen cupboard full of at least 50 books. We had only a very worn children's Bible story book in our house and so that school library seemed to me to be a treasure house.

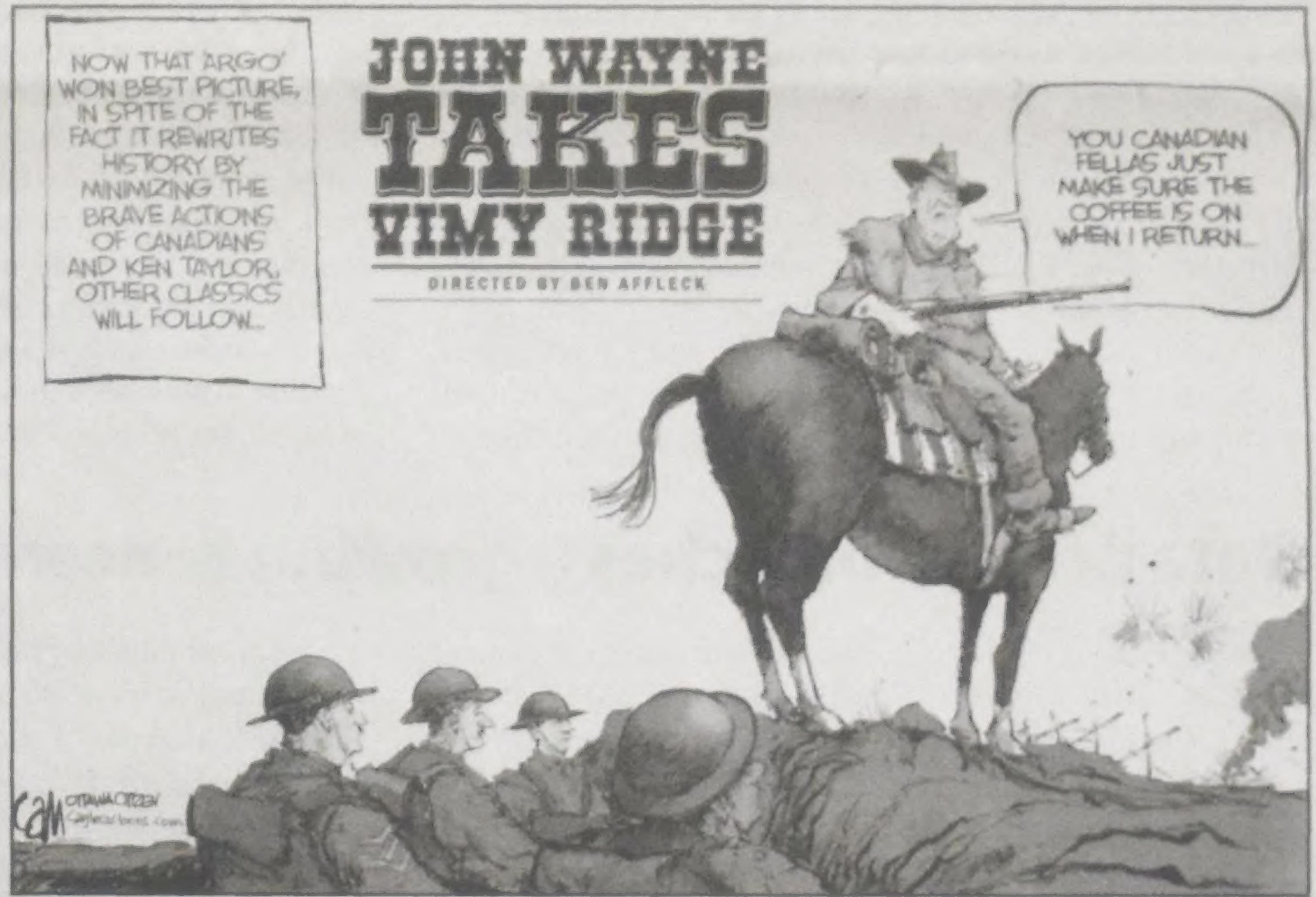
I completed grade 8 in 1949 and that year the state of Minnesota mandated that all such one-room schools were to be closed to make certain that children in rural communities would go to larger consolidated town schools. The school board asked the teacher what was to be done with the library books. Mrs. Orud, my teacher, said, "The only child in this school who loves to read is Gloria. I think we should tell her to take whichever of the books she wants." Can you imagine how thrilled I was? Of course I took every one of them and as soon as I had the books in my home I carefully wrote my name in each one.

Fast forward to 1957. My then-boyfriend, Bill Stronks, had just been hired to teach grades 5 and 6 in the new Hamilton Christian School on Mount Hamilton. I went with him to help get his room set up and was horrified to see that there were no library books. I telephoned my parents in Minnesota and asked them to ship my 50 books to us. The books were quite worn by that time and so we covered them with oil cloth.

Fast forward once again to 1980 when I was a professor of education at Dordt College. One of my students, returning from Ontario after Christmas break, said, "I told my aunt that you were my professor. My aunt said, 'Gloria Goris? That's that kid who wrote her name in all our books!'"

Hamilton District Christian School now has a lovely library and I am certain none of my old books are any longer a part of it. But every time I remember the words, "That's the kid who wrote her name in all our books," I smile. I hope they loved those books as much as I did.

Dr. Gloria Goris Stronks
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News

Evangelical group's Christian stance is 'anti-gay' say CIDA, NDP leader



Government grants to Crossroads have been frozen.

Marian Van Til, with files from TCI, SNN, CCC, CBC

BURLINGTON, Ont. – Crossroads Christian Communications is being subjected to a "review" and withdrawal of funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) because it adheres to a traditional Christian view of homosexuality and describes homosexuality as a perversion and a sin.

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird seems to have set off the controversy when he called statements on Crossroads' web page regarding homosexuality "offensive" and "mean-spirited." Crossroads called homosexuality and transvestism perversions and listed them along with pedophilia and bestiality. That statement has been taken down and replaced (see below), but the original statement is still viewable online as cached webpages.

According to the CBC, Baird told the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, "If there's, you know, any evidence that anyone receiving a grant from the government of Canada is using that money to spread hateful or mean-spirited or offensive practices, it will be put to an end immediately. And those [sentiments] are not the views of the government."

Since 1982 Crossroads has provided \$35 million in relief and development aid to 41 countries. In the last decade Crossroads has been a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) partner of the CIDA and has received \$2,664,000 in CIDA funds in those 10 years. International Cooperation Minister Julian Fantino ordered the suspension of funds while the review is being conducted.

Crossroads produces Christian radio and TV programs, including "100 Huntley Street," at its Burlington, Ont. headquarters, but it is also active overseas, including in



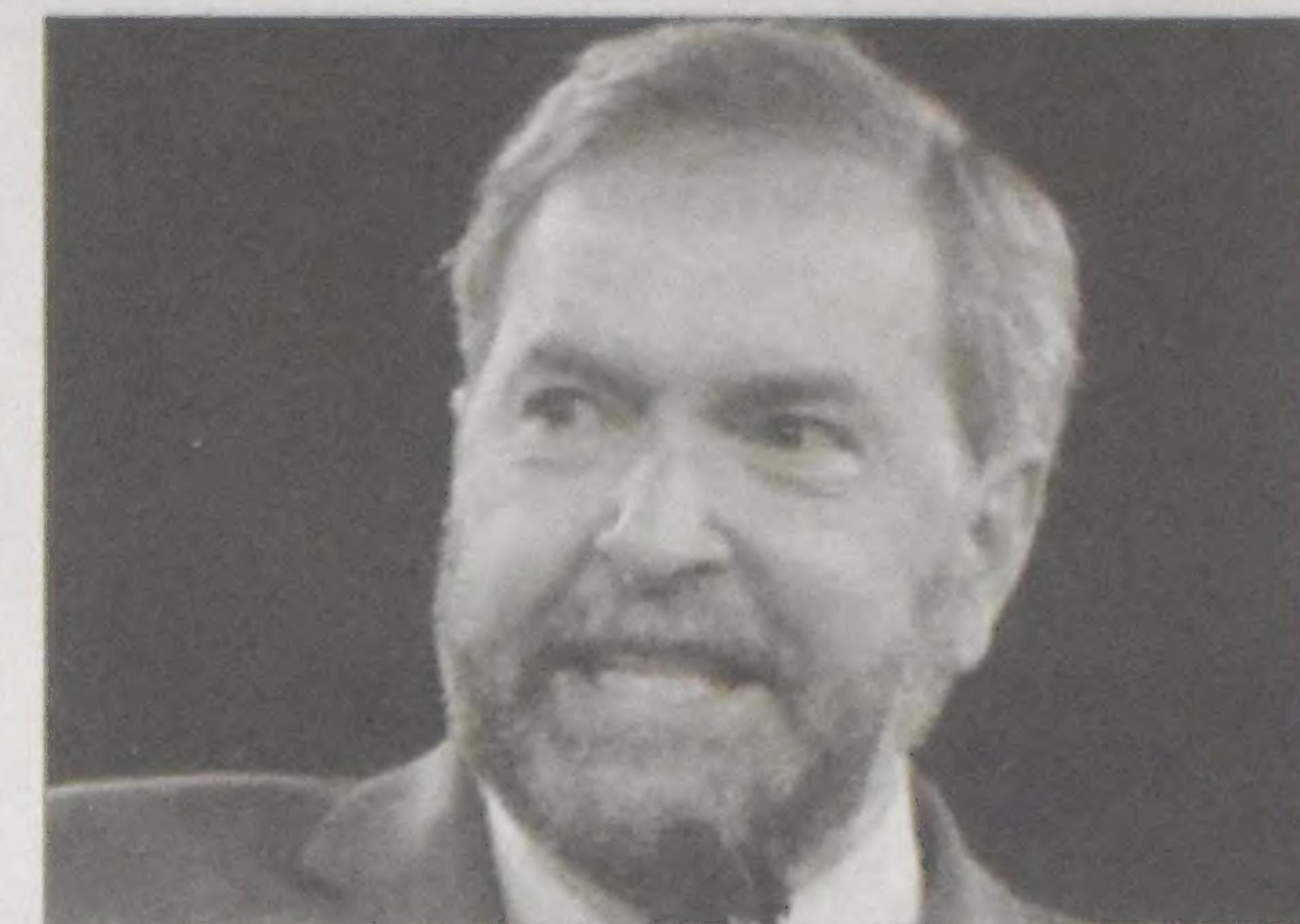
Uganda, where it helps dig wells and latrines and promotes hygiene awareness. Fantino noted that in Uganda, "gays and lesbians face severe threats." Fantino, however, also spoke in support of Crossroads. "We fund results-based projects, not organizations," he said. "Projects are delivered without religious content, including this particular project." A spokeswoman for Fantino additionally noted that "the government of Canada has funded projects by this organization since 1999."

Following God's blueprint

Crossroads defended itself to the press and on its website. "Crossroads is not anti-gay. At the heart of the Crossroads organization is a desire to love people unconditionally and to serve them selflessly. Crossroads believes that God, as the Creator of the human race, outlines in the Bible ways for us to live in order to experience the most fulfilling life possible, and that God's blueprint encourages sexuality within a marriage."

Crossroads continued, "This same blueprint instructs loving others, just like God does, with an infinite value for every human being regardless of differences that include gender, race, religion and sexuality, and to endeavour in every way, to ensure that people are treated with love, compassion and respect. In this way, people can show love and respect to each other even when they disagree."

The group says it agrees with the Canadian government when it "strongly opposes the criminalization of homosexuality and violence on the basis of sexual orientation." Uganda is considering criminalizing homosexuality. Crossroads, however, says it does not "seek to influence matters of policy in countries in which we are completing relief or development projects."



Mulcair denounced Crossroads for "getting taxpayers' money."

Evangelical view is 'un-Canadian'

Meanwhile, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair blasted Crossroads and Canadian evangelicals in general over their opposition to homosexual sex. It "goes completely against Canadian values and law," he asserted. "It's un-Canadian." He decried what he called "these types of evangelical groups with vision that goes completely against not only Canadian values but Canadian law" and denounced them "getting Canadian tax-payers' money."

Interim Liberal Leader Bob Rae took a different view. He told Parliament Hill reporters on Feb. 13, in the wake of the controversy, "People of the Christian faith in this country do great work across the world. They do tremendous humanitarian work. The monies that are raised by those communities and spent in those communities in the poorest of conditions, in the most difficult conditions around the world, are a reflection of their faith and of their love for their fellow human beings."

Don Hutchinson, vice president and general legal counsel with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, said Mulcair should know the Supreme Court has ruled that religious beliefs don't disqualify Canadians from engagement with government. Hutchinson also noted that Canadian evangelicals have spent more than \$535 million on development work overseas.

At CC press time, the CIDA funds originally allocated to Crossroads were still being frozen, and there was no word when the "review" of Crossroads would be complete. ▶

Data privacy breaches a growing concern

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – American government agencies – state, local, and federal – made a record 13,753 requests to read emails or gather other information sent through Google's Gmail and other services in 2012, more than half without warrants, according to statistics released by Google.

The total number of users about whom government agencies wanted information also set a record at 31,072, up from 23,300 in 2011, the first year Google began reporting the data. The discrepancy comes because government agencies request information on multiple users or accounts at the same time.

Most of these electronic information searches were done without a search warrant.

Google announced in June 2012 that it had 425 million active Gmail subscribers, making it the largest e-mail provider in the world. It gives users the ability to store documents via its Google Drive service, phone service via Google Voice, YouTube, personal blogs via Blogger, as well as email hosting services for corporate clients through Gmail.

Google keep records of all email and other communication sent through its e-mail, telephone, YouTube and other services, storing the information on "cloud" servers – a move that allows government agencies to access some information without a warrant. U.S. Federal law allows government agencies to access Google's archived email and other data, including chat logs, YouTube user information, voice messages and blogger information without obtaining a search

warrant or establishing probable cause. Google says that it complies some 90 percent of the time.

Because all types of requests usually come through some kind of criminal investigation, Google does not notify users when the government demands to read their emails or access their account information. However, Google says that in cases where it is legally allowed to inform users, it tries to do so. The law that allows this is the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) which says that opened email stored remotely – not on a computer's hard drive – can be accessed without a warrant.

If the government wants to read the content of an email accessed through Gmail, hear a voicemail message sent over Google's telephone service Google Voice or read other private content, it must still obtain a search warrant under federal law. Information not sent in the body of an email or recorded in a voice message can be obtained by a subpoena – which does not require a government agency to show probable cause. Other types of information require a court order from a judge, such as the IP address of a particular email, email addresses of those who correspond with and the web sites a person has visited.

'Aversion' to the cloud

In Canada there are slightly different government-related privacy worries. Because of Macleans writer Jesse



No search warrant?
No problem!

Brown calls "wrongheaded aversion to cloud computing," the Canadian federal government allows its thousands of employees to put work-related information – much of which can be sensitive or privacy-invasive – on portable memory sticks and take them home.

Brown calls attention to the scandal of Canadian spy Jeffrey Delisle passing such memory sticks containing classified military intelligence to the Russians for four years running before being discovered. Brown also notes "a careless employee of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada" who lost a USB key containing data on 5,000 other Canadians. Thirdly, Brown calls attention to the disappearance of "a hard drive containing the sensitive personal information of 583,000 student loan borrowers." Last month, a series of new data breaches from B.C. apparently involved millions of health records. Portable electronic USB storage devices were also involved in that breach.

Brown recently wrote a four-part "Privacy Reality Check" series at Macleans.ca. He notes that none of those cases changed the way the government handles sensitive data. He also notes that, like in the U.S., the government does not have to disclose privacy violations. ▶

News

New CRC-RCA hymnal available for online preview

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan (CRCNA) — Would you like a preview of *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, the new, soon-to-be-published joint hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America?

If so, you can sign up online for a sampler of worship materials to read over and perhaps discuss with others. Sign up at liftupyourheartshymnal.org.

A link to the download of the sampler selections will appear in your email inbox as soon as you sign up. There is no cost. However, the music that appears at the bottom of each song is partially blurred to emphasize that the sampler is just that, a sampler — to be used for information and background until June, when the full hymnal will be released. “The songs selected for this sampler provide just a taste of the larger feast that awaits the full collection,” says the introduction to the sampler.

Among its features, the sampler gives a sense of the multicultural emphasis of the new hymnal.

Besides hymns, songs and Psalms in English, the sampler includes materials in Hungarian, Indonesian, Spanish, German, Swahili and Korean.

Variety

Several years in formation, the new hymnal contains about 850 songs ranging from the traditional hymn repertoire to contemporary worship music, and from the music of North America to music of the global church.

An important emphasis of the new hymnal is its attempt to make the texts and music accessible to congregations for worship, small group sessions and devotional times. Each song or hymn includes a keyboard accompaniment and chord symbols, which should help worship leaders to weave the music into different settings.

The first half of the hymnal outlines the entire biblical redemptive history by following the biblical narrative from creation to new creation, including Christ’s life and the Christian year. The second half follows the order of worship, from God calling people to worship through God blessing and sending people out to disciple others. Prayers of praise and lament, services of prayer and litanies for baptism and the Lord’s Supper will also be found in the new hymnal. What is missing, however, is the Heidelberg Catechism and the other doctrinal standards of the church.

U. of Regina joins growing ranks of schools installing ‘gender neutral’ restrooms

REGINA, Saskatchewan (LifeSite-News) — An LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gendered, queer) advocacy group at the University of Regina is congratulating itself for being instrumental in the establishment of “gender neutral” restrooms at the school.

“After two long years of planning and negotiating, the University of Regina will have 10 gender-neutral washrooms on campus,” the UR Pride Centre for Sexuality and Gender Diversity announced late last month on its website. “We will also have a hilarious ‘how to’ guide available shortly.”

Washrooms catering to LGBTQ students are already *de rigueur* in many Canadian universities, including Dalhousie, St. Thomas University, Queens, Carleton, McGill, the University of Victoria and the University of Manitoba.

The newly designated bathrooms on campus are the same single person-use facilities that previously had a sign indicating they could be used by handicapped people of either sex. New signs on such restrooms now show male/female stick figures but the word “restroom” has been replaced

with “gender neutral,” followed by this explanation: “This restroom may be used by any person regardless of gender identity or expression.”

‘Harassment’

The university student newspaper, *The Carillon*, noted that gender-confused individuals using sex-segregated washrooms complained they were subjected to “harassment,” such as bewildered stares and questions from other restroom users, such as “Umm, are you supposed to be in here?”

When the university’s vice president for external relations, Barbara Pollock, was asked for details on situations where students were threatened, Ms Pollock referred to assertions of harassment by UR Pride Centre executive director Leah Keiser, and gave no other comment.

The terms “gender identity” and “gender expression” are themselves contentious. Even those advocating these concepts cannot agree on what they mean. A federal committee hearing on proposed legislation to have “gender identity” and “gender expression” included as protected categories



Separate washrooms are intended to prevent harassment and confusion.

in the hate crimes sections of the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code ended in confusion over the terminology. The bill’s sponsor, NDP MP Randall Garrison (Esquimalt – Juan de Fuca), was not clear as to who would be included and who excluded in these terms.

Quebec: Controversial priest’s lawsuit to proceed against pro-life news agency

MONTREAL (CNA) — A libel and defamation lawsuit against the Catholic, pro-life news agency LifeSiteNews.com will go to trial. The suit was filed by Father Raymond Gravel, who describes himself as “pro-choice” but in line with church doctrine.

Gravel claims that LifeSiteNews’ depiction of him in news articles as “pro-abortion” is libelous. He says he is “pro-choice” but does not support abortion *per se*.

In response to the advancement of the case,



Gravel calls the phrase “pro-abortion” libelous.



Westen says the courts cannot proscribe his choice of words.

LifeSiteNews editor John-Henry Westen called the move “a grave danger to freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of religion, not only in Canada, but in North America.” Westen continued, “Imagine the courts proscribing what pro-lifers are allowed to say and how they are allowed to refer to those who support abortion.”

Gravel served as a Member of Parliament from 2006 to 2008, after reportedly being granted “special permission by the Vatican to run for federal office,” according to the CBC. While serving as an MP Gravel supported the nomination of infamous abortionist Henry Morgentaler to the Order of Canada. Gravel also opposed a bill which would have acknowledged injury of a fetus during commission of a crime as a separate offense from injury to the child’s mother. Yet in 2008 he told the CBC, “I’ve never gone against the church doctrine.”

That same year, the Vatican “forced him to choose between Parliament and the Catholic Church,” the CBC reported. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had received complaints from Catholics who noticed his positions as a parliamentarian that were at odds with the faith.

No animosity

Gravel claims that LifeSiteNews’ reporting about him ruined his reputation as a politician and priest. He seeks damages of half-a-million dollars, plus court costs. A Quebec judge ruled that the lawsuit can advance to trial, dismissing the claims of

LifeSiteNews that Fr. Gravel is merely intending to gag them.

The damages sought by Fr. Gravel are identical to a full year’s budget for the site, according to its editors. It has already spent some \$170,000 on the suit. The Diocese of Joliette, to which Gravel belongs, has had no comment about the situation.



In an 11-year span LifeSiteNews has run some 40 stories about Gravel, and maintains that it merely reported his public statements and media commentaries that aired his disagreement with Roman Catholic doctrine and the teaching authority of Canadian prelates. “In our reporting on Gravel, we were very careful only to repeat exactly what he said. There was no animosity toward him; in fact, we stated our concern for the church, but also for Fr. Gravel himself,” Westen says.

“If this case were outside the issues of abortion and homosexuality and were just about a politician upset that a media organization pointed out his radical views to a wider audience, it would be laughed out of court. But because it is dealing with issues deemed sacred in the new morality, it is being given credence,” Westen asserted. “This is about our freedom as a news service to report news on controversial subjects. We are defending this case to ensure those rights.”

News

Principalities & Powers



David Koyzis



Singing the Psalms through adversity: the Czechs

Indigenous Reformers

In November 1976 I was privileged to visit what was then called Czechoslovakia and its capital city, Prague. Although the communists were still in power and the weather was cold and gloomy during my stay, I fell in love with this beautiful 14th-century urban jewel, which managed to glitter despite the austere Stalin-era buildings at its periphery. As a child I had grown up hearing one of my mother's favourite musical pieces, Bedřich Smetana's *Vltava*, or *Moldau*, a tone poem dedicated to the river on which Prague is built. Thus I was thrilled finally to walk across the fabled Charles Bridge spanning the waterway that had inspired the 19th-century composer.

For an amateur musician Prague is a treat, as its residents glory in the music of Antonín Dvořák, Leoš Janáček, Bohuslav Martinů and many others. Stepping into a church one Sunday I heard a soloist singing two of Dvořák's *Biblical Songs*, which I had worked up in my undergraduate voice lessons and had come to love. Dvořák wrote these haunting songs based on the Psalms while in the United States, after learning of the death of his friend and conductor, Hans von Bülow, and of the imminent death of his own father back in Europe. Not surprisingly, the grieving composer turned to the Psalms for comfort.

While in Prague I visited more than one antiquarian book shop, purchasing an 1845 Czech New Testament and Psalms, a volume about which I wrote some years ago in this space. (In retrospect I've come to recognize the irony in my taking a Bible *out* of a communist country when so many other Christians were taking risks to bring Bibles *in*.)

A few years ago I learned the full story. Jiří Strejc (also known as Georg Vetter, 1536-1599), was a Brethren minister born in Zábrdří in Moravia. Strejc studied in Tübingen and Königsberg, where he came into contact with the Psalter of Ambrosius Lobwasser, a professor of jurisprudence at the university there. Strejc was so favourably impressed by Lobwasser's German translation of the Genevan Psalter that he decided to model his own Czech versification on it, an undertaking he completed in 1587. Strejc is probably best known for his German-language hymn text, *Mit Freuden Zart*, familiar in English as *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns*.



The Charles Bridge in Prague.

Above, the tune to which comes from the Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengesänge* (1566) and bears more than a passing resemblance to that of Genevan Psalm 138. Whether Strejc and Lobwasser ever met I have been unable to determine, but the latter's psalter would come to influence the liturgical life of Czech protestants by way of Strejc.

The modern Czech Republic is a largely secular society with abysmally low rates of church attendance, a condition undoubtedly exacerbated by four decades of communist misrule. Nevertheless, possessing such a rich heritage in Dvořák's *Biblical Songs* and Strejc's metrical psalter, Czech Christians have a solid basis on which to reinvigorate their country's tepid church life six centuries after Jan Hus's abortive efforts at reformation. May God grant that Hus's work finally come to fruition in the churches of the Czech Republic. ▶

David T. Koyzis has taught politics at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, for just over a quarter of a century.

Strejc's text of the Psalms can be found at redeemer.ca/genevan_psalter_files/Czech_Psalter_1900.pdf.

Technically Speaking



Derek Schuurman



A Church body without bodies?

Over the past years, some people have begun to establish "virtual churches" online. Virtual worlds, like the one called "Second Life," allow people to immerse themselves in computer-simulated environments using a graphical representation of their character called an avatar. In these virtual spaces, people direct their avatars to do the same things they do in the real world, such as traveling, using and building things, and interacting with other avatars. But what about attending a virtual church? Should churches embrace this new medium and worship as digital flocks in a virtual world?

Several years ago Flamingo Road Church established an Internet Campus and an Internet Campus pastor. Another online church, LifeChurch.tv, offers several online "weekly worship experiences" and has bought "real estate" in Second Life and built a church with seating for avatars to attend church. There are numerous other virtual churches such as St. Pixels, i-church and the Anglican Cathedral of Second Life. Supporters of virtual churches point to the millions of people in cyberspace, most of whom are unreached. Simon Jenkins, one of the early virtual church pioneers, observed "It's like someone has created a new town and no one has thought to build a church there. It's almost scandalous."

But can a virtual church really be a true church? The Belgic Confession teaches that the true marks of the church include the preaching of the word, the administration of the sacraments and the practice of church discipline. It seems plausible that one could preach the word and share the gospel in a virtual world, but what about the sacraments? Already, there have been virtual baptisms and virtual communion services online. Another question is whether the *koinonia* of a physical community can be reproduced



Should we be sending missionary avatars into online communities, like this virtual church?

online. Is there something distinctive about real physical interactions or might they one day become indistinguishable from virtual experiences? Should missions agencies associated with denominations like the Christian Reformed Church send church planters into Second Life?

New mission field?

In his book, *SimChurch*, Douglas Estes explores what the theology of "virtual church" might look like. Estes suggests that there are no Biblical directives that would forbid establishing a virtual church. In fact, he argues that Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman at the well place the emphasis in worship not on physical place or geography, but rather in the Spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24).

In contrast, several writers on the topic of faith and technology warn about the impoverished form of community and

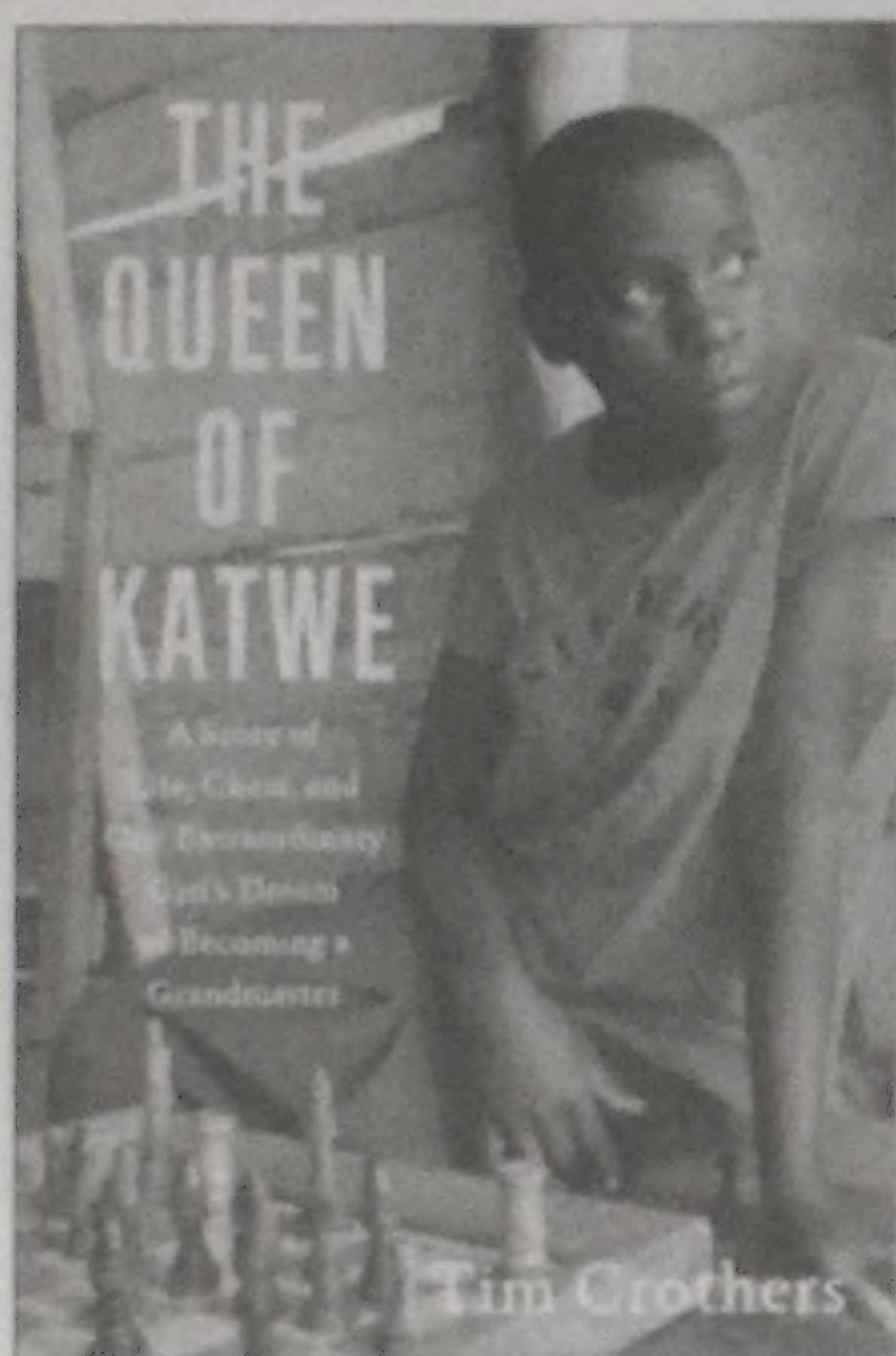
presence in cyberspace. Tim Challies writes in his book *The Next Story* that cyberspace is "a space that is really no 'place' at all." Shane Hipps notes in his book *Flickering Pixels* that social networks give the illusion of intimacy but at a level that is just enough to act as a substitute for real intimacy. Douglas Groothuis, in his book *The Soul in Cyberspace*, writes that virtuality should not "beguile us into mistaking connectivity for community." Brad Kallenberg provides an even stronger critique in his book *God and Gadgets* where he argues that human communication requires three conditions: time, place and bodies, things that technology "bewitches us into thinking we can ignore." There are also concerns specific to virtual worlds: encountering avatars engaging in perverse activities, the separation of physicality and identity and the possibility of having multiple personas.

As technology continues to advance, there may come a point when we are able to see, smell, touch and move about in virtual environments that remove the boundaries of place and the restrictions that apply to our physicality. Once physical senses are captured and reproduced with fidelity in a virtual world, the arguments for a virtual church may become more challenging to refute.

Can a virtual church be an authentic church? Can there be a body of believers that meets without bodies? My instincts tell me that even in our high-tech world, there is something important about our bodies and about physical community. As we enter Lent, we are reminded of Christ, the Word made flesh, who gave his physical body as a sacrifice and later rose bodily from the grave. And one day, we will live forever, not as disembodied spirits in an ethereal heaven, but with new physical bodies in a new heaven and earth. ▶

Derek Schuurman (dschuur@cs.redeemer.ca) attends a church in the real world called Immanuel CRC in Hamilton, Ont.

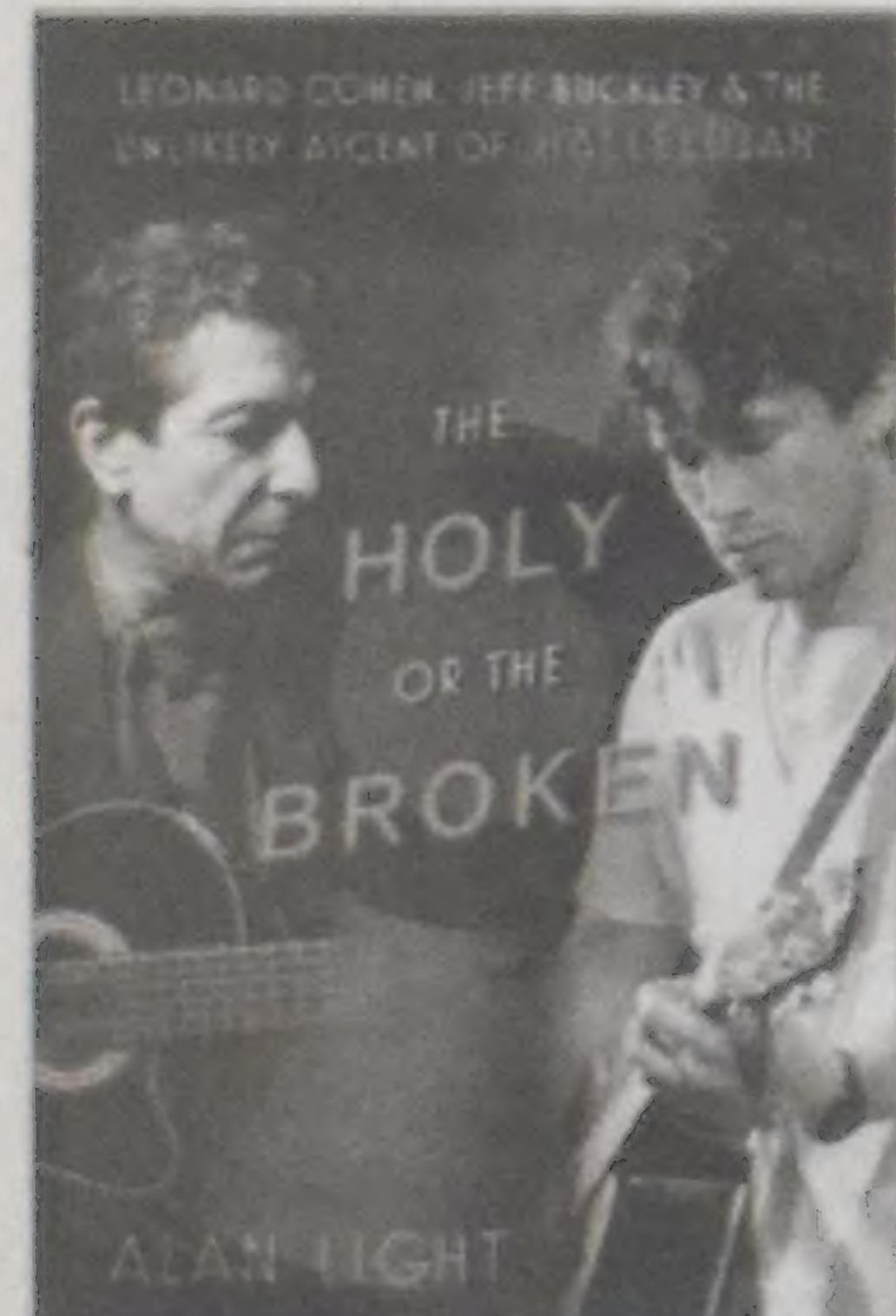
Reviews



The Queen of Katwe:
A Story of Life, Chess and One Girl's Extraordinary Rise from an African Slum
by Tim Crothers
Random House Canada, 2012, 242 p.

was difficult. Harriet often had to leave her children on their own in order to work, and they didn't know when she would return. She says, "When I wake up in the morning I commit my kids to God's hands. I don't always know where my kids are. God is like their father" (80).

God answered Harriet's prayers as Phiona became involved in Robert Katende's chess club in Katwe. Katende, a missionary for Sports Outreach, grew up in the slums and knew the challenges that kids like Phiona faced. Through the game of chess – so unfamiliar in Uganda that no word for it exists in their language – Katende hoped to teach children "how to see into the future" (65) by reading their opponents' minds. Katende believed that "chess is the best tool for kids in the slums. I believe when they play the game they can integrate the principles used in the game into their daily life. The moment your opponent makes a move, it is like posing a challenge to you, and the whole issue is to think, 'What can I do to overcome this?' It is like the challenges they face every day. They must think how they can overcome those as well" (64).



The Holy or The Broken:
Leonard Cohen, Jeff Buckley and the Unlikely Ascent of 'Hallelujah'
by Alan Light
Atria Books (2012) 288 p.

The original song was all but ignored by fans and critics. After being covered by alternative icon John Cale in 1989, "Hallelujah" was heard and covered by Jeff Buckley five years later. It then it appeared in an episode of the sitcom *Scrubs* and in a cartoon about a misunderstood ogre. Yes, the song's unlikely (and arguably inappropriate) inclusion in the original *Shrek* movie was a big part of its ascendance. It has since been used in 9/11 tributes and after nearly every disaster since. It has appeared in countless television shows and is now one of the most frequently sung tunes on *American Idol* and other singing competitions. My wife was recently asked to sing it at a wedding! That's just weird.

"Hallelujah," as the book describes it, functions as a sort of spiritual Rorschach test. Listeners tend to hear the theology they bring to it more than what is, or isn't, really there. Light unpacks as much of Cohen's original intent behind the song as anyone possibly could. He explores the juxtaposition of Biblical images (David, Saul, Bathsheba, Samson and Delilah) with shockingly crude sexual references sliding between those universally sing-able choruses. Cohen, Light asserts, continues in a long tradition of Jewish song-

God uses chess

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Katwe, the largest of eight slums in Kampala, Uganda, "is one of the worst places on earth" (17), according to author Tim Crothers, a former senior writer at *Sports Illustrated*. Because the slum is often submerged in flood waters, residents avoid drowning by sleeping in hammocks suspended just beneath their roofs. Raw sewage, flowing in trenches, finds its way into people's shacks.

In this setting of desperation and hardship, where people eke out a living and hope for at least one meal a day, Phiona Mutesi has emerged as one of the world's best chess players.

As Crothers relates Phiona's story, it becomes very clear that God has protected, guided and sustained her throughout her short 16 years. When Phiona's father died of AIDS, her mother, Harriet and three siblings faced an even bleaker future. Often fighting suicidal thoughts, Harriet was transformed when she accepted Jesus as her Saviour. Still, life

was difficult. Harriet often had to leave her children on their own in order to work, and they didn't know when she would return. She says, "When I wake up in the morning I commit my kids to God's hands. I don't always know where my kids are. God is like their father" (80).

God answered Harriet's prayers as Phiona became involved in Robert Katende's chess club in Katwe. Katende, a missionary for Sports Outreach, grew up in the slums and knew the challenges that kids like Phiona faced. Through the game of chess – so unfamiliar in Uganda that no word for it exists in their language – Katende hoped to teach children "how to see into the future" (65) by reading their opponents' minds. Katende believed that "chess is the best tool for kids in the slums. I believe when they play the game they can integrate the principles used in the game into their daily life. The moment your opponent makes a move, it is like posing a challenge to you, and the whole issue is to think, 'What can I do to overcome this?' It is like the challenges they face every day. They must think how they can overcome those as well" (64).

Transferable skills

Katende soon became aware the Phiona had incredible talent. She was 11 years old when she became Uganda's junior champion. At the age of 15, she earned the title of national champion. And in 2010, she traveled to Siberia – a totally foreign world with cold weather, modern amenities and more food than she had ever encountered – to compete in the Chess Olympiad. Today, Phiona dreams of eventually becoming a Grandmaster. She echoes Katende's sentiments about chess by asserting, "I learned that chess is a lot like my life. If you make smart moves, you can stay away from danger, but you know any bad decision could be your last" (93).

What are Harriet's dreams for her child? She says, "I want Phiona to be a child that is pleasing to God" (227).

The Queen of Katwe gives readers a glimpse into a world that seems so hopeless, one would never expect to find hints of life and joy. Yet they do exist. God is at work in Phiona, in Harriet, in Robert Katende, in Sports Outreach and the churches in Katwe.

There is hope, but many questions remain for Phiona: "Can she keep on improving in chess without a more advanced coach? Can she improve without books and a computer? Can she improve without sponsorship? Can she really become a Grandmaster? Can the attention to her story make her a target in Katwe? Can she avoid the pressure to become a mother? Can she still thrive if she has HIV? Can she get out of Katwe? Can she stay out?" (226).

These questions apply to Phiona. But on another level, they apply to all children born in Katwe, no matter what their gifts. And that is one of the greatest tragedies – though all children are born with gifts, many of the world's underprivileged children never discover what they are, or have a chance to develop them if they do. All humanity is poorer as a result. ▶

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyavf55@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.



Phiona compares slum life to chess: any bad decision could be your last.

The generic genius of Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah'

John J. Thompson

In his impressive new book *The Holy or The Broken*, veteran rock writer Alan Light meditates on "Hallelujah," the song that may be the 20th century's most influential and misunderstood secular hymn. In the way other books tell the story of a particular person, this is the biography of a song. Sure, it was penned by celebrated poet-writer-singer Leonard Cohen, but it is clearly much bigger than him or any of the hundreds of other artists who have interpreted it. It is regularly called one of the greatest songs of all time by people who should know about these things.

As a songwriter myself, as well as someone who has worked with songwriters for years, this is a fascinating book. Light reveals something surprising, and not all that comforting, about the modern popular culture's power to pluck anything with commercial value out of obscurity and then profit wildly from it – even if that "something" is a maudlin meditation on personal failure, sexuality and fractured spirituality.

The original song was all but ignored by fans and critics. After being covered by alternative icon John Cale in 1989, "Hallelujah" was heard and covered by Jeff Buckley five years later. It then it appeared in an episode of the sitcom *Scrubs* and in a cartoon about a misunderstood ogre. Yes, the song's unlikely (and arguably inappropriate) inclusion in the original *Shrek* movie was a big part of its ascendance. It has since been used in 9/11 tributes and after nearly every disaster since. It has appeared in countless television shows and is now one of the most frequently sung tunes on *American Idol* and other singing competitions. My wife was recently asked to sing it at a wedding! That's just weird.

"Hallelujah," as the book describes it, functions as a sort of spiritual Rorschach test. Listeners tend to hear the theology they bring to it more than what is, or isn't, really there. Light unpacks as much of Cohen's original intent behind the song as anyone possibly could. He explores the juxtaposition of Biblical images (David, Saul, Bathsheba, Samson and Delilah) with shockingly crude sexual references sliding between those universally sing-able choruses. Cohen, Light asserts, continues in a long tradition of Jewish song-



The secular hymn has become a spiritual Rorschach test.

writers as he details failure and pain but then ends with the Hebrew admonition to "praise the Lord." As has been the case with most of his oeuvre, he artfully explores depression, isolation, abuse and the ugly side of interpersonal love with elements of faith serving the role of dim lighting in a dark room.

A hunger for more

Cohen is an observant Jew and a Zen Buddhist priest. According to Light, he consciously intended to marry the sacred and the profane in the song, thereby "liberating" the concept of hallelujah from anything specifically religious. He claims to have laboured over the song for years, crafting some 80 verses before settling on the four or five we know. But after all that work he is supposedly happy for the world to adopt the song and use it however it wants.

We sure seem to love songs and stories that can tickle our spiritual longings without demanding anything of us. "Hallelujah" doesn't ask us to believe anything or to respond in any particular way. We can sing the tune, feel something emotional and then move along our own path as if there is no God and no instructions for living and loving in his world. That may not be what Cohen intended, but if Bon Jovi is singing a song about sex and loneliness at a memorial service, that's what's happening.

On one hand, I'm encouraged that maybe the popularity and universality of a song like "Hallelujah" points to humanity's continued hunger for God. However, that that hunger seems to be placated by a song so disconnected from the Gospel is frustrating. No doubt the universality of the song is part of its genius, but I'm not sure that it's actually praising the Lord if by "praise" we simply mean "sing" and by "Lord" we really mean "something comforting that may or may not really be there."

But boy can we sing "Hallelujah." ▶

"JJT" has been chasing the thread dangling between eternal truths and temporal creative experiences for nearly three decades. He is a writer, a businessman, a father, an artist and a seeker. Read more about him at JohnJThompson.com. This review originally appeared at ThinkChristian.net.

Features

Ontario Christian Gleaners: 'Using surplus produce to feed a hungry world'

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In the December 18, 2006 issue of *Christian Courier*, readers learned about a fledgling organization called the Ontario Christian Gleaners (OCG). It was being modeled after the Okanagan Gleaners and the Fraser Valley Gleaners in B.C., operations in which volunteers process donated vegetables into a dehydrated soup mix, which is distributed worldwide to hungry people through reputable relief organizations.

In September 2006, after working on a zoning amendment for over a year, OCG received approval from the North Dumfries Town Council to proceed with erecting a processing and storage facility on donated land on Morrison Road, south of Cambridge. At that time, an estimated \$500,000 was needed to set up a 7,000 sq. ft. building and purchase necessary equipment.

What has happened to OCG since then? *Christian Courier* interviewed Shelley Stone, OCG manager, to find out.

How did God lead you to become involved in OCG?

With more than two decades of experience working with registered charities and in social services, God has given me a passion to inspire people. As a child, I heard that "hungry kids in Africa would love to have the food we throw out." I now lead a volunteer-driven effort, working with the slogan, "Using surplus produce to feed a hungry world."

What are your day-to-day responsibilities?

Each morning, volunteers are greeted with announcements, updates, stories of blessings from overseas and a short devotional. This helps us to keep the big picture of why we do what we do.

I oversee production, connect with mission groups receiving or reporting on our food donations and do a Q & A with groups who tour our operation. Afternoon responsibilities include food sourcing, scheduling shipping and receiving, occasionally unloading a truck, communication about food distribution, correspondence and looking long range.

Where does the produce come from?

Soup vegetables are donated by packing plants, importers and growers – 30,000 pounds a week, sometimes dropped off right at our building and other times collected with our own five tonne truck.

How do you ensure that you have enough?

Food sourcing falls to me. I do my job to the best of my ability and then I need to trust God. Thirty thousand pounds of veg-

etables are a lot of food each week, and yet we have never had a day without. And we operate year round. I recall one day during our first spring when I had concerns that we would run out midmorning. Right after our devotional time, the phone rang with a new donor offering us cabbages that were 12 minutes away. We see this ministry as God's work. He does it his way.

How is the produce processed?

After a quick ride through the "drive-through carwash for the vegetables," volunteers gather around stainless steel tables and trim the vegetables into big chunks, all the while chitchatting with their neighbours. The dicing machine then quickly shoots out thin cubes, preparing the vegetables for a one hour ride through the belt-style dryer. The dried vegetables are preserved at a 10 percent moisture rate, eventually mixed together with a variety of vegetables, and sealed in a plastic bag.

What about distribution?

Reputable Christian mission organizations with the funds and logistics in place for effective distribution receive our food. Eastern Europe, Asia, about twenty different countries in Africa, and Central and South America have benefited. Most of our food goes to feed school children. The kids come to school because they will receive a meal.

How long does it typically take for the food to reach its destination?

Containers can take a month or six weeks to arrive and clear customs.

How much food has OCG distributed to date?

We have been blessed with steady growth each year. In 2012, we sent out more than seven million servings of soup.

What role do volunteers play?

Three hundred volunteers are involved each week in a synergistic effort – trimming, dicing, drying and packaging vegetables, as well as washing pails, cleaning floors, shining the bathroom, cutting the grass, preparing coffee break, tipping compost and breaking down boxes. According to volunteers, the best perk is that you can just show up. Walk in the door and we will put you to work.

Is the plant environmentally-responsible?

There is a significant carbon footprint to produce food. There is also a significant carbon footprint to get rid of food that is not used. The same with packaging for food. OCG makes good use of the food and disposes of the packaging in an appropriate



School at Villa Esperanza hosting a lunch program (left). Shelley sharing Smarties with a child in Puerto Plata (right).



manner, usually dropped off for recycling. The shipping pails are picked up from a recycler, washed and sent out as a precious gift to a family needing to carry water.

I imagine that this is satisfying work, helping people at their most basic level of need. How has it impacted you?

This role has been very faith-building for me. We need to trust God for 30,000 pounds of donated vegetables every week from a list of 12 ingredients, all year round, through the Ontario winter and spring. That is a lot of food. It's amazing that we have never had a day without. We have always had enough food and people to complete our tasks for the day.

Can you give us some examples of that provision?

Equipment breaks down and someone is there who knows how to fix it. One busy fast-paced morning, our dicing machine quit. It's an essential piece of equipment. It "happened" that we had the right people on site to diagnose the problem. It was the motor. I called a local repair shop, briefly introduced the work of the Gleaners to the owner, and he agreed to look at the motor as soon as we arrived at his shop. Later, the motor arrived back in our building, some capable volunteers dropped it in the machine, we fired it back up, and we never missed one inch on our dryer. When we watched the timing and the implications of all that had gone on, all we could say was "Wow!" When I called the shop owner later to thank him and assure him I would be by later to settle the bill, he said, "Shelley, there is no bill."

We have numerous stories of God surprising us with generous people, skilled people, people who would not call themselves Christians, but who want to help. These resources seem to come together in God's perfect timing to remind us that he is master over all. Our role is to give him the glory, and to tell of his wondrous deeds to the generations.

Recently you travelled to the Dominican Republic (DR) for OCG. Can you tell us a little about your trip?

We spent one week in the Puerto Plata area, visiting some of the organizations who

use our soup. The Samaritan Foundation provides homes in villages for the poor. They use our soup to feed school children and provide small amounts for families in need. In their partnering school, three students gave heartfelt speeches of thanks to the Gleaners for providing the lunch meal on their school days. In their prayer, they thanked God for the food and prayed for our volunteers.

Two other schools educating Haitian children living in the DR sang songs for us in English and French. A few students recited poetry and showed us their artwork. We were treated as honoured guests, which was a little uncomfortable for me. The teachers in those schools do amazing work. Our part is to help nourish the children physically and, hopefully, spiritually.

Orfanato Casa Tesoro de Dios in Puerto Plata cares for 22 orphan children. We were delighted to see them in their new building that can accommodate their needs. Pastor Joel effectively cares for the people in that poor community. In addition to spiritual care, he helps families whose homes were washed away by the rising river, visits recovering addicts at a local care centre, and meets with government officials, encouraging them to hear about the needs of the poor people.

Any last thoughts?

Sometimes we get short-sighted and see only the people that we worship with under the same roof as the body of Christ. Or, perhaps, just those within our denomination. The body of Christ extends all over the world. It's amazing that we can have an instant connection with someone from another culture and another language because we are all part of the same body of believers.

We have calculated that every hour of volunteering translates into 146 servings of soup. There are some ways of volunteering off-site, but, if you are high school age and older, you can just show up at our building and we will put you to work. ▶



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Features

Sea to Sea Bike Tour: poverty now has faces

Christeena Nienhuis

Living and teaching in Uganda – breathtaking and exhausting as that is – has been one of the best experiences of my life.

I am six hours southeast of Kampala, Uganda in a small trading centre called Dwaniro. Sam, the school administrator, picks me up early each morning by motorcycle, and drives me eight kilometres along dirt roads to Tata – a village of about 10 buildings – on the outskirts of which our wood-slat school is situated.

My 22 students cram into nine desks that wobble precariously on the dirt floor. The neighbouring classes peer through the cracks in the walls to get a glimpse of the white teacher. My students and I laugh at our attempts at discussing algebra and the human digestive system. They are honest, hardworking, respectful and so full of life and laughter that each day I leave the classroom more rejuvenated and joyful than I ever could have imagined. Seeing their eager, almost tireless faces awakens energy in me that I do not know I possess. Their beautiful faces, their stories, their laughter, their abundant energy . . . all strike me deeply. Their joy and openness in life, despite their circumstances, humbles me. How can children who have literally lost everything still smile?

I am experiencing poverty firsthand.

On top of teaching, I see the school struggling to meet the basic needs of these children. Meet 13-year-old Vincent Otiendo. He sniffls and favours his swollen shin while a friend helps him limp along his parents are dead. Moreover, like so many children, he had decided to take his chances on the streets after fleeing the

mistreatment of the uncle who had taken him in. In the few days since Vincent has arrived, he has worked hard to settle into the new school, new bed, new people, new friends and new city. Yet despite the nice bandage covering the cut and bruise on his shin, the tears pour on, rolling off his jaw, staining his shirt. His shirtsleeve busily swipes at the tears that pool in his eyes and smears away the snot plugging his nose. I sense that these tears are not simply a response to the physical pain in his shin, but a cry for any acknowledgement of his existence. "Does anyone care?" his tears ask. It is a release that has been building for a long time. My heart breaks for Vincent.

My heart breaks for all the children here who share similar stories. There is so much pain, so much need and I am completely overwhelmed! It is difficult to maintain a

heart that is sympathetic to the numerous cries for help. How can one person make a difference?

Anointed to preach good news

Mary, a Kenyan woman who has taken over 300 orphans into her care, shares her insight with me one day. She explains that her ministry only exists because of God. Her passion for doing the will of God rings in her voice and illuminates her no-nonsense face. This woman is on a mission for her God. She claims, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19). To Mary, poverty is a form of imprisonment. She explains that she plans to live her life so that one day, when she stands before God and the Almighty points to these biblical commands, she will be able to say, "I gave everything I had to help those you have called me to help."

This time in Africa has shaped me. I have lived with these people. I have cried with them, laughed with them, worked with them, worshipped with them, prayed with them and even watched some of them die.

I have taught dozens of kids, marked hundreds of exams and never enjoyed myself more. These people are living, breathing examples of faith in Christ and his awesome power. No amount of explaining will be able to scratch the surface of what I have felt and experienced.

Back on North American soil, my life has been thrown completely upside down. Culture shock overwhelms me. I am continuously reminded of Mary's rousing words. I hear God's call to care for the widows and orphans (James 1:27), but I continue to feel that I am unable to even begin to help those in need. I cannot help but wonder: am I doing all I can for those God

is calling me to help? Is there not more I could do, more I could be for these precious children? Could I not be more compassionate? Could I not be more welcoming? Could I not love them more?

Nevertheless, God is continuously reminding me that it is only through his grace that I am able to do anything at all. I am not courageous enough, strong enough, nor energetic enough, but I am daily choosing to live my life as a humble servant of Christ.



Christeena with students in Kenya (above). Teaching math (below)

Like Mary, I want to be able to stand before my God one day and know I did everything I could for those in need. It is only through the grace of God that I continue to press on toward that goal.

Pressing on toward the goal

With this passion in mind, and having returned to a life that bears no similarity to my time in Uganda, I needed something to remind me of these people and of what I had learned. So I signed up for the Sea to Sea Bike Tour . . . again. Having cycled in 2008, I know what I am getting myself into physically: the hours in the saddle, the scorching heat and exhaustion, the sore muscles, the blisters and the sunburns. I am aware that I have signed up for all this yet again. But more importantly, I am now doing something tangible to help those in need. I am involved in something visible, moving in the right direction.

You see, for me, poverty now has faces. It's not just some obscure notion about people suffering "over there." No, these are my friends. Perhaps some of the funds raised will go to help Micheal, the orphaned 12-year-old boy with a kidney problem, or to help Moses achieve further education, or to help Evalyne, the beautiful young girl who works after school with her widowed mother. When I am struggling through the mountains, I will think of these beautiful children and just keep pedalling because together, as followers of Christ, we must take to heart God's call to care for the orphans and widows in our world, one day and one person at a time.

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking up something and gently throwing it back into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked "What are you doing?"

The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up, and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they will die."

"Son," the man said, "Do you realize that there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You cannot make a difference."

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said, "It made a difference to that one!"

~ Loren Aisley ~

Christeena Nienhuis spent this past summer volunteering in Uganda and Kenya and is now training and fundraising for Sea to Sea this coming summer. She is working on her master's degree in Global Studies and TESOL at Providence Theological Seminary in Manitoba. Find out more about Sea to Sea at www.seatosea.org. Follow Christeena on her journey across the continent at christeenan.blogspot.ca.



Features



Christian Courier is pleased to present this third article in a six-part series on First Nations topics. Our guest writers are author James C. Schaap and PhD candidate Seth Adema. James Schaap focuses on the CRC's outreach efforts to the Zuni people in Rehoboth, N.M., while Seth Adema, who is studying aboriginal interactions with the Canadian criminal justice system, examines Canadian concerns. We encourage our readers to offer feedback either by way of a letter to the editor (editor@christiancourier.ca), comments online at christiancourier.ca or by tweeting us at twitter.com/ChrCourier.

Righteous acts, filthy rags and a mission cemetery: Part II

James Schaap

A few years ago, I interviewed some Navajo folks whose roots grow back into the century-old story of the CRC's Rehoboth Mission and school. All remember their boarding school days very well – a few fondly, some very angrily. Several told me they have friends who would not walk on the mission compound again, so deep is their resentment.

"I didn't know a word of English – didn't get a word of what people were saying," one man told me, a man taken to Rehoboth by his grandparents in 1945. Older Navajo boys would translate occasionally, he told me, which helped greatly; but it was the military-like regimen that still makes him shake his head. He remembers them all marching off to dinner, marching off to school, marching off to church, two-by-two, like soldiers, like cavalry.

Forced and often meaningless memorization and an unflinching commitment to what seemed perfunctory obligations to religious ceremony that were rarely understood made some Native kids simply "go through the process, and a lot of people resent that today," he said. He remembers having to memorize the Heidelberg Catechism. The education given to him made many feel dishonoured because the implication – stated or not – was often violent and stark: "If you don't do this – if you don't do that, you're going to hell." What was presumed worthy of damnation was frequently behaviour associated with Navajo culture; what was redeemed was what was white – and even CRC.

Some antagonism, or so it seems, is borne from the perception that all children, regardless of history or race, might have when being sent away to any boarding school. "I just thought my parents were sending me here to get rid of me," a woman told me. "We didn't have good experiences at boarding school." Her experiences up until high school were most difficult. "There were no gray areas – you either can or you can't." And then she stopped. "There are a lot of things that I will not speak of from my third grade until high school."

Those who do not regret their boarding school educations balance whatever antipathy they have with what their parents or guardians considered the requirements of a future that would undoubtedly be less tribal and more "white." One man told me his grandfather, a wealthy sheepherder and rancher, sent his grandson off to Rehoboth in the late 30s, when the boy, just 10 years old, knew no English. His grandfather's argument was easy: "When in Rome, you do what the Romans do." By the mid-20th century, it had become evident to some Navajo leaders that significant change was inevitable.

Nonetheless, what Navajo and Zuni kids undoubtedly encountered, even mid-20th century, was an educational experience that, perhaps even by design, denied (at best) or even damned (at worst) the way of life which those students left behind them.

Boarding school legacies

Systematic "cultural abuse" was, in fact, carried out on boarding school students throughout North America. While Rehoboth students were enrolled by their families' choice and not conscription, many aboriginal children were snatched out of their homes and offered very few opportunities to return, even to visit, during extended school years. North American First Nations were victims of a policy that



Crosses without names.

was often created and carried out by Christians, many of whom fully believed that what they were doing was the work of the Lord. But what was often created is what some Canadian commentators call "soul wounds."

Believers, like me, have much for which to be sorry, much for which to feel shame. What Canadian aboriginal policy called "aggressive assimilation" is probably most fully understood by non-Natives by way of a Bible verse frequently quoted by old-time Calvinists: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Is. 64:6 NIV).

Without a doubt, it is easier for me, a white man, to say it, than it is for someone who is Native, but what seems clear is that "the boarding school" concept itself isn't evil; educational reformers from a different time and place seem as enthusiastic about its possibilities to educate students today, as many such reformers – my grandfather among them – were a century or more ago.

In 2009 Arne Duncan, then Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools and today the U.S. Secretary of Education, unveiled a pilot program, Chicago's first urban boarding school, an institution deliberately created to offer opportunities for the children of the homeless, as well as kids from troubled homes. "The proposal puts Chicago at the forefront of urban school reform," the *Chicago Tribune* reported, "as cities struggle to raise the academic achievement of students hampered by dysfunctional homes and other obstacles outside school."

Off-reservation boarding schools still exist and today often have waiting lists. A story by Charla Bear on National Public Radio a few years ago featured the heinous record of such institutions, but also recounted successes, such as the story of Seana Edwards, a Prairie Band Potawatomi from New Hampshire, who was failing badly in her public school classes before transferring to Sherman Indian High School, Riverside, Calif. Today, Ms. Edwards attends the University of California at Berkeley and frequently returns to Sherman to urge students to excel at what they do.

Rehoboth Memoirs

That boarding schools had devastating effects on Native cultures throughout North America cannot be disputed. However, many boarding school graduates are deeply thankful for the education they received in those institutions.



Rehoboth Christian Mission School, founded in 1908, as it appeared in 1927.

A retired lawyer who worked most of his life on the reservation could not speak highly enough of his Rehoboth education in the 40s. "I am humbled by what I learned at Rehoboth and will be forever grateful to the wonderful people who made education available to me and continue to make it possible," he told me. "I learned how great our needs really are and how to think constructively and to be constructive."

Some boarding schools – like Rehoboth – offered quality education, excellence in academic study, which some Native people desire. An older couple, who went to the BIA school at Ft. Wingate, noticed that Rehoboth kids who transferred to Wingate were simply better students. When their own children came to school age, they decided on Rehoboth. "There was something different about Rehoboth kids," they told me.

Another man remembers fondly his experience of the first few days, 70 years ago when he was a little boy. "I went right away to the dormitory to Mrs. Van – she was our matron. Her welcome was so great – it was like 'come to my house.' I don't care what colour your skin is, you're my child. From there on, I didn't feel anything but welcome. At that moment, the welcome was so great, I accepted."

Miss Van knew enough Navajo to speak to the little boys in her charge, he says, and she showed them love, not hate. He was six years old, alone, miles from his home, in a dormitory, in a mission school; but when he told me the story, his eyes began to tear.

Yet the legacy of Indian boarding schools on this continent is what it is, and it's important to note that the love and care this man felt as a child didn't remain a constant throughout his years at Rehoboth Mission school. He stayed until 1946, when he was 15; and he left when the discipline turned harsh and repressive. "I don't know how many times I got punished," he told me. So one day he simply couldn't tolerate life at the school anymore. "I said, 'What shall I do?' So I ran away. And I never came back."

From such memories of Rehoboth, I began to fit some pieces together, pieces of a story that include those long lines of white crosses over unmarked cemetery graves, as well as my grandfather, the preacher, and the significant role he may well have played in this story.

James Calvin Schaap is professor emeritus at Dordt College. He is the author of over twenty books including the recently published *Honest to God, Sixty at Sixty* and *Rehoboth: A Place for Us*. He blogs at siouxlander.blogspot.com



Columns

Roots and Wings



Emily Cramer

Worth the money

Seven o'clock rolls around, and the kitchen is a maelstrom: counters crusted over, dinner plates towering precariously, sink clogged with carrot chunks. The high-chair is smeared with black bean puree like modern art, the floor below it starred with puffed rice cereal. The dishes need to be done, but my legs are tired from standing over the stove, my arms jello-y from lugging around a solid one-year old all afternoon. And the bedtime routine still lies, dauntingly, before me.

I hike the yelling baby onto my hip and haul us both up the stairs. We wash at the bathroom sink, where she manages to wriggle a soapy hand free and smack the mirror. When I pick up her tiny toothbrush, I see the "look": she sets her lips in a tight line. So I get my toothbrush and pretend to brush with a "swish swish" sound. She likes that, and laughs, allows me five seconds' access to her four bottom teeth before the trap slams shut again.

We head to her bedroom where I strip her down and change her diaper. Gone is the slack, bendable newborn body; she twists and turns like an autumn salmon, bangs on the wall, grabs for everything in sight. I play games to distract: "What does the horse say?" and she rewards me with a grin before twisting the other way with vigor. Somehow, she ends up in pajamas, and we drop into the armchair to read a book. There is still a bottle to be given, lullabies to be sung, prayers to be said, bedding to be arranged, bunny to be found. When at last I close the door behind me, it is with an exhausted sigh and the overwhelming knowledge that the whole thing will start again in about 12 hours. Yet somehow, I also have a feeling of satisfaction stronger than any I've experienced.

The hedge fund

Attachment is proportionate to investment. I am attached to – I love – what I invest in, and the costlier the investment, the deeper the attachment. In the business world, there is a certain rationale to giving employees high levels of responsibility; the more ownership people have, the more of themselves they give to a task. I think this must also be half the magic of parenting. This investment in my daughter, this all-consuming responsibility which is often mine alone, has forged a bond that is irreversible and unbreakable.

I sometimes wonder what life would be like if I in-



The lyrics of Mumford and Sons, pictured below, recognize the link between investing and love.

vested this deeply in all my relationships. What would it mean to take personal responsibility for others, to believe that their failures are my failures and their successes, my successes? What would it be like to care so deeply for their wellbeing that my own mattered not at all? This is what it feels like to be a parent, but isn't it also implicitly Christ-like? Jesus invested so deeply in the minutiae of our lives that he joined us here, ate with us, wore our clothes, entered into our secrets. His was an investment that blasted through our blockades, swallowed up our failings, dispersed our ugliness, our cruelty and smallness and made children of us. And didn't it cost him everything?

I don't know how to share that burden of love authentically, and maybe I resist trying. This investment in my child is exhausting and expensive. I see the road ahead of her and dread the sorrows she will face, knowing I can't protect her even though she feels like an extension of my very self. Loving like a parent is bittersweet, it is weighty, and sometimes I doubt I have the resources to extend it to a second child let alone into the world beyond my little family. But what would life be worth without it? In the end, doesn't giving love away do the very last thing you'd expect: satisfy the giver? The more of myself I invest, the more of myself I discover and liberate. Oh God of the counterintuitive, teach me your kind of investing. Teach me to bank even pennies of self-sacrifice, for what a valuable life I might discover and what a rich world I might help to build.

Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and daughter and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College. She has just returned to fiction by struggling through Michael Chabon's Wonder Boys

*Where you invest
your love, you
invest your life.*

ARTFUL EYE



*Moses and the Brazen Serpent, 1600-1629.
Peter Paul Rubens*

Faith

Resolute, I uphold the sovereignty of God,
When day after day, a panorama of failure
Upon failure, obscurity, and doubt – the
Brutality of life merely serves to confirm –
Accumulates beyond the confines of faith,

Expanding like heat.

Nevertheless,

Nurtured like a dream,

Silent and resilient like death,

An image,

Cast into bronze and lifted up,

Is remade and protracted,

Into a still life of life, limbs, and blood,

Against the pedestrian discomfort,

Of silence and hunger,

The need for more, always more,

Instigating a return,

To the only point of solace,

Driven to my knees.



Heather Rose is a newlywed living in Roanoke, VA, with a BA in Cognitive Psychology. Her favourite thing to do is to walk her two dogs in the woods and pray.

Columns

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang



When I was last in Holland, I discovered that my great-great-grandfather was murdered by a 14-year-old kid with a rock. But what stood out for me was not the gruesomeness of the crime, but rather the redemption that followed it.

In an age where murder and violence are sensationalized, where the guilty go free and cavalierly speak on talk shows, my own family's history, long buried, speaks to me of a time when people felt it necessary to answer to a higher power than Oprah.

And I hope it speaks to you, also.

In the 1850s, the Rang family was rich. We became rich by hunting whales in the North Sea off the coast of the northern Dutch island of Ameland.

We were so rich that my great-great-great-grandfather Evert – who was a whaling captain – had custom-crafted chandeliers made in Amsterdam and hung in the *Gereformeerde Kerk* in Hollum, at his expense.

Then, in the 1860s, the whales disappeared. In fact, so did a couple of towns on the island of Ameland – Sier and Jelmera – which were eaten up by the sand dunes and swallowed by the sea. But that is another story.

The collapse of the commercial whaling industry left the Rang family stranded on an island with few natural resources and even fewer prospects.

Of Evert's four sons, three drowned in various accidents. The remaining son, Sybrand, became a teacher. He also drowned at a very young age – but not before he married and had a son.

His son, Hibbe, became a subsistence farmer, scratching out a living by growing potatoes and making mustard. He sold what he could around the town of Hollum, but it was difficult because he was slightly crippled and walked with a cane.

By the time he married, Hibbe was an old man of 39. He married a young woman of about 28 named Aukje Hibbes.

They had a baby. They named him "Sybrand." He died after a few days.

They had another child. Also "Sybrand." He died after a few weeks.

Then, they named their third son "Dirk." He survived. By this time, his dad, Hibbe, was 43 years old.

Dirk was my Great-grandfather.

There were two more kids after Dirk – a daughter named "Aukje" and a youngest son, again named "Sybrand."

The name Sybrand, apparently, was cursed.

This particular Sybrand spoke in his own, made-up language. He said things like "Bib-am peuje" which meant "Sybrand wants to play." He was odd, and the other kids picked on him.

Whales, potatoes, mustard and murder

One kid in particular – a 14-year-old boy named Willem Brink.

Willem was in Dirk's class. One day, after seeing Willem picking on his 7-year old brother, Dirk beat the living crap out of Willem.

That was a mistake.

One day, Willem encountered Dirk's dad, Hibbe, on the street. The old cripple was returning home from selling potatoes.

They had the following exchange:

Willem Brink: "Hey you worthless old cripple, what are you doing around town?"

Hibbe: "Don't you talk to me like that. You can talk to your mom like that, but not me."

So, Willem picked up a rock and threw it.

The rock hit Hibbe in the head. He was knocked unconscious and lay on the road, bleeding heavily. Willem ran away.

A few hours later, Hibbe arrived at home, in shock, and told his wife and son the story. He was dying, and Dirk knew it.

In any case, there were no doctors on the island.

So he ran to Willem Brink's house. Willem was hiding, and Dirk pulled him out and said:

"Willem, you need to come with me and seek forgiveness for what you've done. Because in a few hours, you won't be able to get it."

So Willem Brink went along with Dirk, and begged Hibbe's forgiveness for what he'd done. He got it. A few hours later, Hibbe Rang died.

Hibbe Rang was 57 years old. Dirk was 14. As the oldest son, it was his responsibility to feed the family. So, Dirk Rang became a sailor – for 11 years he sailed to the far corners of the world – to Singapore, South America and India.

Willem Brink – who was a murderer at 14 – ran away from Ameland and became a sailor, too.

But Willem paid dearly.

In a horrible storm, he was swept out of the crow's nest of the ship and landed, feet-first, on the deck, smashing both his legs.

There was no doctor on board. The sailors did the best they could to set his shattered legs.

A few years later, Willem Brink and Dirk Rang met each other in Hollum. Willem was crippled in both legs.

"Do you remember what you called my dad?" Dirk asked.

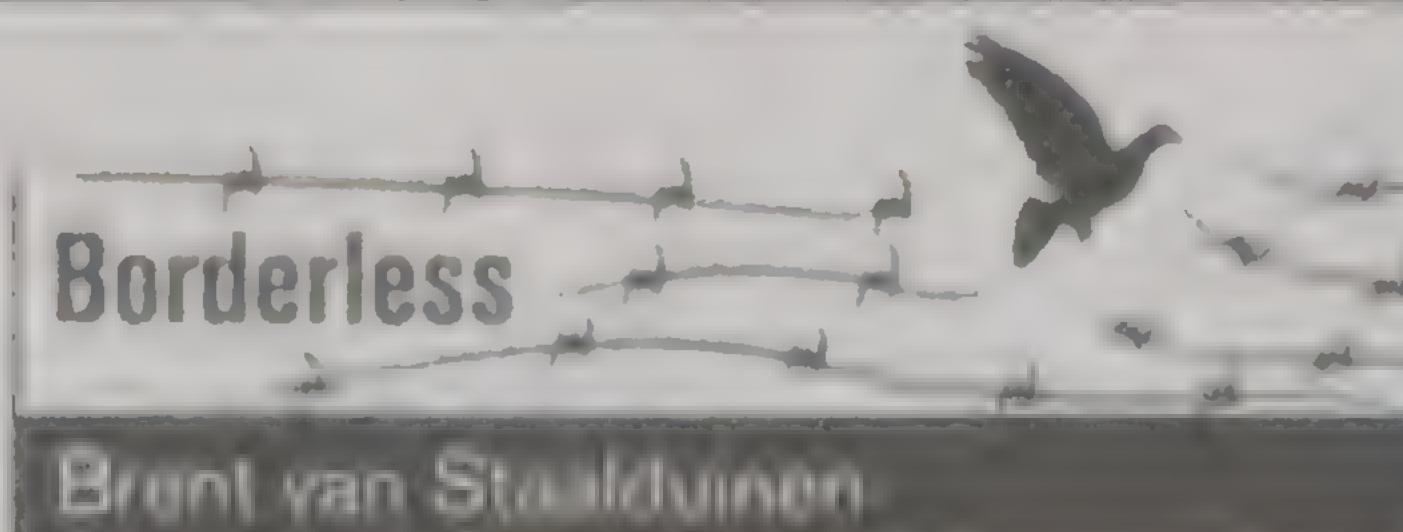
"Yes," said Willem. "And I am ashamed."

"Then let's not speak of it again," said Dirk.

And with that, they became best friends for life – my great-grandfather, and the man who murdered his dad.

Years later, my dad was born. And his name was Willem Rang.

Lloyd Rang (lloyd.rang@rogers.com) lives in Bowmanville, Ont.



I struggle to carry what Jesus gave me, sometimes. Love is heavy. Unconditional love, the kind we've been called to, that turns cheeks and forgives, is so dense you could bind a universe with it.

I'd rather bear my pride. It's far lighter.

Right now, as you breathe and I write, there's a disagreement happening somewhere. Two bearers of light are out of sync. Maybe they're hammering each other with truth. Maybe one is listening while the other won't. Maybe they've already walked away.

Depends on their end game, I guess. I know where my instinct would lead me. Either on the offensive, having souls to win and the words to do it, or the defensive, where my wounds keep me from hearing anything at all. I've won or I've lost, and have completely forgotten about everyone else. A misplaced end game, then, where my need to be right eclipses the call to be salt and light. Expert at disagreement, novice at listening and loving.

Into the familiar, easy, sharp discussions about politics and religion, where everyone floats their pride and opinions to the table. Where leaders and governments are pigeonholed as good or bad because of policy. Where religions and their followers are dismissed as harbingers of evil. Or where the other side of the spectrum is equally polarized, where nations are lauded because of misinformation and propaganda. Or where church leaders are always just and what they say always carries the weight of God.



A belief or creed does not make a person bad or good.

The struggle to discern I wonder where grace went. I wonder when we stopped listening. I wonder when we stopped encouraging others to speak. I wonder when we unlearned the art of waiting. I wonder where we lost the ability to respect as we disagree, honour as we judge, love as we fight.

As though we forget how challenging the ability to discern is, even for those with whom we disagree.

Does a president who furthers the choice of women to abort their babies not wrestle with the difficulty of making that choice? A prime minister who refuses to meet with a hunger-striker not lament a missed opportunity to sit down and be understood? A mayor who

This wonderful burden

champions the use of cars over transit not ponder the challenges of the vulnerable? A military leadership that launches drones and attacks not agonize over the loss of innocent life? A pastor who decides to allow homosexuals to worship freely in the church not lose sleep over the implications of that choice?

Politics is not a declaration of morality. A belief or creed does not make a person bad or good. A church affiliation is not an indication of rightness or wrongness.

And yet I stumble, I stumble. I've heard the call to love my neighbour and allow grace to move, yet just as often ignore that great commission and vilify those I am supposed to love. Pride tempts my goal to win the argument or, worse still, strengthens the words I use to batter others into retreat. I allow that pride to guide me as though I control the entire narrative and not just my fallen, human chapter. State rather than ask. Opine rather than listen.

On our knees

Do I rejoice in the fractures I create between myself and other bearers of light? Retreat into myself, my strong beliefs, my new church, surround myself with like-minded talkers so we can sit around,

fat and contented, congratulating ourselves on how right we are? How wrong "they" are? How bad? How unworthy of our grace and time?

I do. You do. We do. And we are shamed because of it.

On my knees, then sometimes it's all I have to ask for help.

To see others and understand Christ's voice across the borders and schisms of this world. To seek strength to bear this

burden of unconditional love or, when it's too heavy, find others and carry it to the world together. To understand that answering a calling is not accomplished by opinion or theology but in the burden of love borne on the cross. That salvation has nothing to do with the beliefs of others but by the unmerited grace with which I am drenched.

That the weight of God's love is so wonderful and great it leaves us breathless, forcing us sometimes to stop bickering long enough to bear it together.

Brent and his wife Rosalee now live in the Westdale neighborhood of Hamilton, Ont. and are expecting their first child.

To find out more about Brent and his wife, visit brentvans.com.

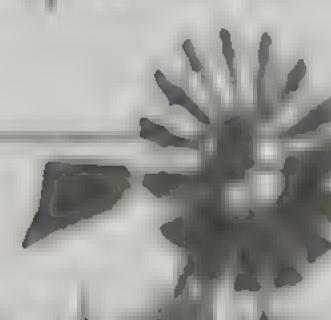
Columns



Taking it to the next level: woodpile art

Country Living

Meindert van der Galien



Warmed twice: An ode to woodstoves

Life was so much easier when the old wood furnace was replaced with an efficient oil one three years ago, but there was something missing. Wood heat! Oil heat just isn't the same. I missed cleaning up the fallen trees and making firewood. I grew up doing bush work and always loved it. Now my trusty, high performance chain saw sat idle in the garage. Oh, I'd start it up now and then and cut a few branches here and there. The best exercise you can get is swinging around a chainsaw. To stay in shape I walked more. But when the power was off, which happens occasionally, the house was cold and there was no way to heat it.

Last winter, the fire insurance agent was over to renew the farm and house policy, and I told him I was thinking about putting a wood stove in the basement. He suggested I put one right in the corner of the kitchen and it would heat the whole upstairs. "You have to have it done professionally," he warned.

So last fall, we had a neat, efficient wood stove with a glass front door installed in the corner between our kitchen and dining room. I still had a good supply of dry hardwood in the shed. A flu pipe goes straight up through the attic of our bungalow, with a short chimney pipe up on the roof. It is so cozy seeing the bright flames through the window and sitting there beside the heat. The stove with a built-in fan cost \$3,900; installation and the chimney was around \$3,000. We thought we'd use the oil furnace when it was really cold. That didn't happen. It takes a small wheelbarrow of wood each day to heat the upstairs. When visitors come they want to sit by the fire.

Stability

Heating with wood is about a lot more than home heating. It is a tangible expression of self-reliance, of the courage to buck the trends and to resist the appeal of sedentary, push-button convenience. Heating with wood reinforces links to the land and is a willing submission to the cycle of the seasons. It provides stability and security in a turbulent world. I now feel like a homesteader again.

By any measure, wood is an important residential energy resource, especially out-

side large urban areas. Over 10 million U.S. households, just under 10 percent of the total, use wood as their main heating fuel or as a supplement. Over 25 percent of Canadian households burn wood. One cord of wood burned as firewood provides the heat equivalent to that produced by burning 200 to 250 gallons of heating oil, depending on the type of hardwood that is used.

Well-stacked rows of firewood are a comforting sight. A drive through small towns and down country roads in forested regions confirms that firewood is a significant energy resource. The long lines of piled firewood standing in yards serve as proof. Every winter the wood is cut from woodlots and every spring it is split and stacked to dry in the summer sun. It is a seasonal ritual that has recurred year in and year out for decades, for generations.

Henry Ford once said, "Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice." I think the number should be higher: cutting down the tree and cutting it into blocks, splitting the blocks, piling it up to dry, and the nice heat it gives off.

Exercise

When you chop firewood with hand tools like axes and splitting mauls, you put several different muscle groups to work. Your shoulders, arms and chest get a great workout. Your legs also get a good workout, because if you're chopping properly you should be using your legs to generate power.

And then there's everyone's favourite muscle group to work on: the abdominals. When you swing an axe, you pull downward using your stomach muscles all the way. Chopping firewood is kind of like doing a bunch of crunches standing up, only a lot less boring. Moving the big heavy blocks of wood can be back-breaking work and I always use a front end loader bucket to scoop them up. But even using a wood splitter can be good exercise.

If I get all the blocks split this spring, I should have enough firewood to last five winters. It tells you how much I missed the wood. ▶

Meindert van der Galien has been writing newspaper columns for 25 years. He lives near Renfrew, Ont.

Stewardship by the numbers

Many Christians feel called to serve God through environmental stewardship, yet are overwhelmed by the enormity of the issues facing us today. This is the final installment in a series that offers practical, concrete steps towards improving our care of creation.



Materials and products

Jordan Hoogendam

My wife and I are in the process of selling our home, and, over the years, we focused on using sustainable materials and reducing our environmental footprint during renovations. Putting our house on the market has given me a chance to reflect on the current state of the "green materials" industry. There have been some exciting changes over the past decade.

In the early days of the green building industry, finding low-emitting, recycled and sustainably sourced products was a challenge. Information was not readily available; companies couldn't answer questions about the chemical composition or raw material sources of their products. Finding a sustainable product represented a significant investment in time and effort. Since then, fortunately, the products and materials industry has now largely embraced the green building movement. Companies are providing new products and materials that perform better and are healthier for humans and the environment.

Paint: The paint industry has revolutionized its products, a leader in the documentation and reduction of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). One of the most exciting developments is the availability of recycled paint. Boomerang (boomerangpaint.com) is a made-in-Canada success story (RONA carries this paint under their ECO Line of products). They collect unused paint and recycle it into 16 pre-defined colours. Their paints are superior in terms of ease of use and wear. The standardization of the colour palette means no mixing, thus allowing for easy return of unopened cans. The cost per gallon can be less than half of a "premium" low-VOC paint. On the other hand, if you prefer to have your pick of colours, look to your favourite paint suppliers, as almost all have a "low-VOC" line of paints.

Flooring: The range of products available for flooring is astounding. We installed cork flooring, a renewable product that is easy on the feet, warm and has great impact resistance (for those prone to dropping things). Engineered wood flooring, whether it is FSC laminate, or rapidly renewable bamboo flooring, expand the look, feel and durability of green flooring solutions. Even sheet vinyl floors (the common low-cost alternate to linoleum) are now available in a low-emitting solution – ask for "FloorScore Certified".

floors to ensure that you are buying the best in class products (sescertified.com/products/index.php). For those of you who like the comfortable warmth of carpet, look for carpets that have low-VOC adhesives, and comply with the CRI (Carpet & Rug Institute) Green Label Plus program.

Furniture: If you're looking for eco-friendly ways to furnish your house, consider purchasing solid wood (such as Amish-made furniture) or pre-owned furniture. To ensure that the wood used is sustainably harvested, ask for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified products. When buying any composite or engineered wood products, be sure to avoid any Urea-Formaldehyde, a commonly used toxic binder. Many suppliers have alternate products for little or no additional cost. If you are interested in buying new, ask for GREENGUARD™ (greenguard.org) certified products such as seating, tables and desks.

Building Materials: A great range of building materials contain high-recycled content (RC) and/or are locally sourced.

- Concrete Blocks – look for lightweight blocks with up to 100 percent RC
- Steel Studs – as a wood alternate can contain as much as 25 to 40 percent RC
- Insulation – fiberglass, or mineral wool range from 20 to 30 percent RC
- Composite Wood – MDF, particle board, etc. from 60 to 100 percent RC
- Drywall (aka Gypsum Board) – can contain as much as 95 percent RC
- Acoustical Ceiling Tiles (ACT) – can contain as much as 50 to 60 percent RC
- Carpet (Broadloom / Tile) – can range between 15 and 35 percent RC

My parting thoughts: with increased availability comes increased competition, and the net result is that green materials can at times be the same cost as their conventional counterparts, or in some cases (such as the recycled paint) can be more cost effective. Companies are realizing this and many are switching to producing or carrying only environmentally sound products. If you're planning a project around your house, take some time to ask for certified, low-emitting products – your family and your body will thank you! ▶

Jordan Hoogendam is an Engineer who lives in Kitchener, Ont. with his wife and family. Previous articles in this series can be found at christiancourier.ca.

Canada needs more kids!

Or we can look forward to a smaller economy and fewer benefits

Derek Miedema

With the current shape of demographics in Canada, we have before us one of two choices: More kids or fewer government benefits. The situation is such that having more children would only help cut our losses, not fix the problem.

Worried about overpopulation? Don't bother. The real issue before us is this: Canadians are not having enough kids and population aging is the problem.

It's been more than 40 years since Canadians had enough children to replace themselves.¹ In 2010, Canada was 109,000 babies short of replacement. Since 2002, we're behind a whopping 1,022,971.²

Fine, some may say. Who needs kids? They take up room and cost too much. Others argue they hurt the environment by requiring bigger cars, bigger houses and just generally, more "stuff."

However, the real questions, in the long view, are the following. Not "who needs kids?" but rather, who needs taxpayers to

cover their healthcare costs when they're old? Who needs young employees to re-stock the employment pool while all the Baby Boomers are retiring? Who needs first time homebuyers to help the housing market keep afloat? How can we maintain our standards of living, no matter how high or low they might be, without a growing work force and more taxpayers?

The questions, as it turns out, go on and on. You may balk at the idea of birthing more Canadians, but certainly troubling is the reality that there will be needs we can't currently fill. We need doctors and nurses to care for us when we're sick. We need family to advocate for us when we can't speak for ourselves in the hospital. Individual choices have consequences, as it turns out.

Why aren't we?

Some will immediately jump to the extreme: What are you going to do? Force families to have children? Thanks for asking. The answer there is no. However, perhaps families could have the number of children they say they want. Canadians say in polls that they want to have more kids than they actually have.³ That they aren't is due to a number of different factors.

For one, it's expensive to raise kids and to upgrade that two bedroom condo into a house to fit them. Research shows, in fact, that finances are the top concern for families no matter how old or young the kids are.⁴

Another reason we aren't having more kids is that we're having kids later: Waiting to have kids means fewer kids for people who

don't want to be a 50-year-old parent chasing a toddler. We're having kids later, in part, because we are marrying later. We're having kids later and marrying later, in part, because sex and babies are no longer connected, courtesy of oral contraceptives, aka the Pill.

No quick fix

So what's the solution? Many will say more immigration. And while immigration is a great part of what makes Canada tick, it will not be able to save us. The current age structure of immigrants is not slowing the aging process. The only way to balance things out would be to bring two to three times the number of children currently welcomed annually. That would mean bringing parents along, which would radically swell the overall number of immigrants every year. This is politically unrealistic and worldwide demographics also render this unlikely: As economies improve in Asia and India, will people still want to leave their homes and families to come here?

What then? Bigger baby bonuses? Perhaps we could have counted on government largesse to encourage having more kids in the past, when the economy was firing on all cylinders and strong economic growth looked permanent. Neither of those is true today.

Besides, whether or not to have children, or to have a second or third or more is an intensely personal decision between parents. And we know that government doesn't belong in the bedrooms of the nation.

Neither does government belong so deep inside our wallets. Governments should allow families to keep more of their



Canadians in polls say they want more kids than they have.

money, since finances are a top concern for most. Income splitting, promised but not yet instituted federally, is a huge step in that direction.

There is, of course, no instant solution. How could there be? When governments have been beating the population control drum for more than 40 years, it'll take some time to change.

Reality calls all of us to make a choice: Have more kids or deal with lower health-care coverage, lower pensions and a smaller economy. In that light, we might just consider having more kids. Either that, or the retirement of the baby boomers is going to mean that our federal and provincial governments will have to shrink their spending just to maintain what we have today.

Derek Miedema is a researcher for the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada (IMFC). He lives in Smiths Falls, Ont. The IMFC released a full report on Feb. 15, Forty years below replacement, which can be downloaded at imfcanada.org.

1. Statistics Canada (2008).
2. Statistics Canada (2012).
3. World Values Survey Association (2000).
4. The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada (2007).



CC SEEKING APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW EDITOR

If you love film, fiction, poetry, theatre, music and memoirs, and you frequently give others advice on what to see/read/listen to, then this job might be for you. *Christian Courier* is looking for an articulate Review Editor to engage with a variety of media from a Reformed, Christian perspective by editing three and writing one review per month. Reviews should include a thorough summary and a thoughtful, spiritually-informed critique with a redemptive bent (turn to page 9 for two examples).

It's worth noting that this opportunity is unique. "The role of the critic in the place of the contemporary world of media has been reduced to 5-star ranking systems," Nick Schuurman, outgoing Review Editor, says. "That this is a distinctly Christian publication allows for the role of Review Editor to be something much richer than that; works of art can be understood in terms of expressions of our creaturely capabilities, for good and for ill, and viewed in terms of God's redemptive agenda."

For more information, email Angela Reitsma Bick at editor@christiancourier.ca. Resumes will be accepted until March 30, 2013.

INTERESTED IN WRITING?

Christian Courier is looking for two new columnists to contribute one 750-word article each (per month). We would like an emphasis on pop culture, fatherhood, economics or medicine but all proposals will be considered. Interested and experienced writers should send two sample columns to editor@christiancourier.ca by March 30, 2013. Content should reflect the principles of God's sovereignty and our mandate to interact with and reform culture. View some of our current columnists at christiancourier.ca.



Classifieds

Anniversaries



PETER AND GERDINA VERKUYL
(nee Voskamp)

will celebrate 60 years of marriage
on April 2, 2013.

God blessed their marriage with five children, 18 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren (with another on the way). They have lived in Brighton, Ont. for the past 30 years, and have had many wonderful years together.

May God be with them in their years to come.

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Brighton ON, K0K 1H0

1953 April 1 2013

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grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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Obituary

Japke (Jackie) Reitsma-Vander Hoek
(nee: Dijkstra)

Born: March 8, 1918 Died: January 21, 2013

Tiems, Friesland, the Netherlands Cobourg, Ont., Canada

Predeceased by Husband Thijis (May 2, 1978)
and 2nd Husband Wietse Vander Hoek (April 5, 1985)
as well as a little son, Piet, who passed away on May 24,
1948, at age 3.

Daughter of Piet Dijkstra and Grietje Postma.
Mother to

William Reitsma (Brigid Johanssen), Karen Reitsma
Joe and Alida Reitsma

Richard and Margie Reitsma

Peter Reitsma and Wilma Lammers

Margaret and Ron Rupke

Jerry Reitsma and Henny De Lange

Jane and Jasper Hoogendam

Helen and Chris Campbell

Mary and Dan Rupke

Grandmother to 32 grandchildren and 41 great-grandchildren.

Jesus said, "And surely I am with you always,
to the very end of the age." Matt. 28:20

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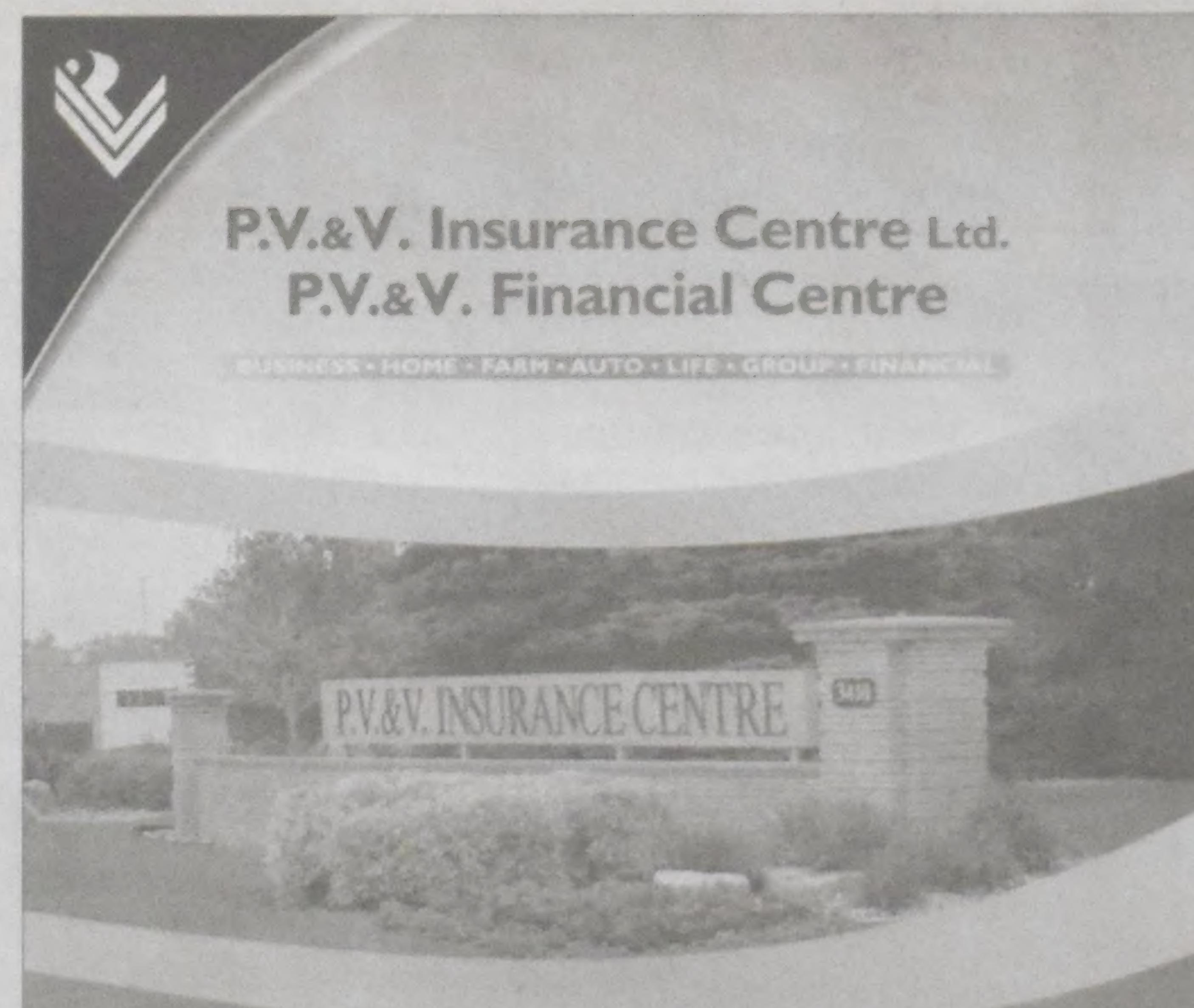
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Job Opportunities

PRINCIPAL / LEAD ADMINISTRATOR – K-12



Houston Christian School was founded in 1962 and is a K-12 school with approximately 100 students. Houston BC is a small town of about 3200 residents. Our community has a strong Christian base and students come mainly from Christian Reformed, Canadian Reformed, Baptist and Pentecostal families. The school is grateful for the solid and stable family character of its education program and marvels at the faithfulness of our God as alumni repeatedly come back and report how positive their experience at our school was. Over the past few years the school has focused intensely on developing more intentional Christian teaching using the Teaching for Transformation format developed by the prairie Christian schools in all curriculum areas. Houston Christian School is an active member of the Society of Christian Schools in BC (SCSBC).

Houston Christian School is accepting applications for a full-time teaching principal / lead administrator commencing August 1, 2013. In the past this principal position was 50% administration and 50% teaching. The Board is open to input on this model and is keenly interested in candidates who will commit to leading development of the school's administrative systems and procedures. The successful candidate will be expected to creatively leverage the strengths of a small school and further strengthen the school's education program and operations to the praise and glory of our God.

The ideal candidate must:

- be a committed Christian
- qualify for BC professional teacher certification
- be dedicated to Christian education
- be able to sign the school's Code of Conduct
- have experience and skill in educational and curricular leadership
- have a minimum of 4-5 years of administrative experience as head teacher, vice principal, or principal
- be committed to professional development. Preference will be given to the candidate who holds or is working towards a Master's degree in Educational Leadership
- have excellent communication abilities and work well with educators, school board, various committee volunteers, and administrative staff
- have solid comprehension and leadership abilities in all school administration and operations
- be able to lead a dedicated group of staff in serving the vision and mission of Houston Christian School

Each application must include:

- an up-to-date resume
- at least 3 professional references including pertinent contact information
- copies of university transcripts
- a written personal philosophy of Christian education and leadership

Closing date: March 15, 2013

Mail or email your application to:

Houston Christian School
Attn: Keith Jaarsma, Board Chair
Box 237 2161 Caledonia Ave.
Houston BC V0J 1Z0

Ph: 250.845.7736 (school office) or
250.845.5230 Keith's day number
250.845.7832 Keith's eve number
Email: kdjarsma@telus.net

Immanuel CRC is a progressive and dynamic church serving the communities of Brampton and Caledon, Ontario, Canada. We are seeking a

Ministry Director

who will be responsible for managing and supporting our vision, staff and ministries, with the objective to enhance the execution of all our ministries.

For a detailed job description go to immanuelcrc.ca and click on "What's Happening."

All interested candidates are asked to submit their resume before March 31, 2013, along with a letter detailing their interests in the Ministry Director position, along with salary expectations to

careers@immanuelcrc.ca

Please note that only qualified applicants will be contacted.

Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Listowel, Ont., is seeking a full time

Youth Director

We have a strong and vibrant youth program. To obtain a complete job description or submit a resume, please contact Ray Heeres: rayheeres@hotmail.com or 519-291-2040 or Bethel CRC Office: officebethelcrc@gmail.com 519.291.4000.

Cornerstone CRC of Chilliwack, BC has an immediate opening for a half time

Director of Worship/Music

The qualified applicant will have a deep love for Christ and His Church and a passion to give expression to our Reformed world-view utilizing a broad range of musical skills in a "blended" worship setting.

For a position description and to submit a resume and application please contact the church office at office@cornerstonecrc.ca or 1-604-792-2517

Calvin CRC, Ottawa, Ont., is seeking a

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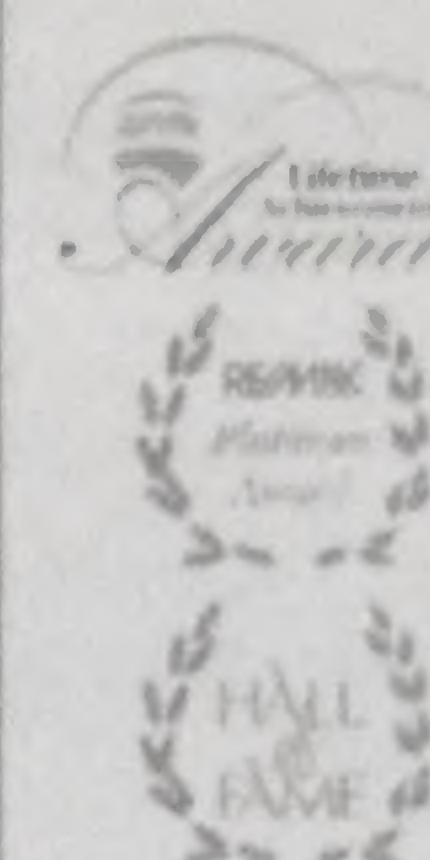
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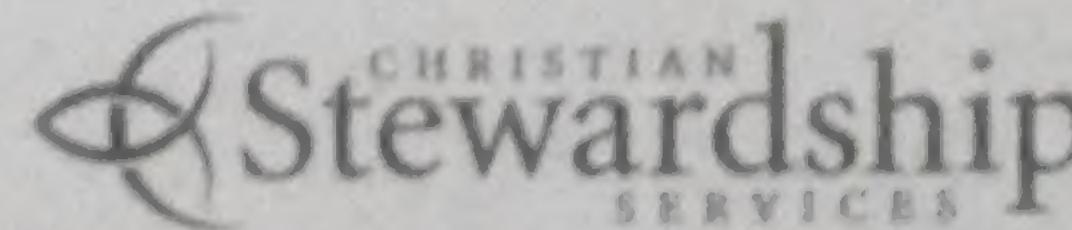
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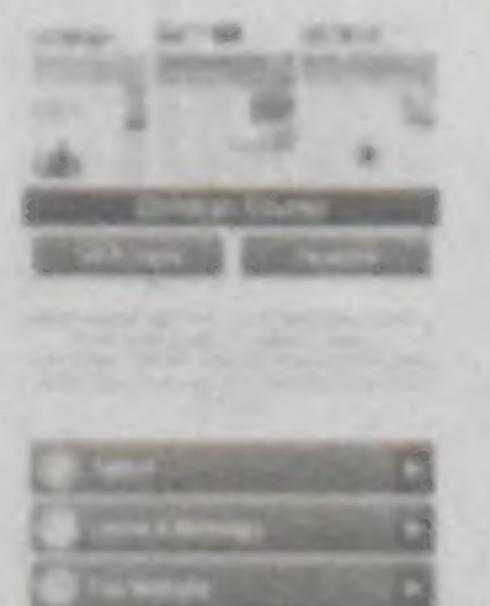
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Unique ministry sows Reformational seeds around the world

Angela Reitsma Bick

"May I speak with Xiaozhou?"

A response in Chinese.

"Is Xiaozhou there?"

More Chinese words.

"Can't you say one word in English?"

When the Chinese student used an English word at last, Wybe Bylsma exclaimed, "Ah! You *can* speak English!" Although Xiaozhou no longer resided at that university dormitory, Bylsma struck up a conversation with this new student, and began once again his unique style of international evangelism.

Some weeks later, Bylsma asked whether his new friend believed in God.

"No."

"Are you interested in learning about God?"

"Yes . . ."

"Why don't you find a Christian to talk to at your university?"

"That's too difficult."

"Well, let's have a contest then. You are living in Wuhan, while I am on the other side of the world in Canada. Let's see who can find a Christian in your city the fastest – you or me."

Bylsma immediately canvassed his extensive network of friends and in four days won the contest, finding five Chinese Christians in Wuhan. As a result, this student joined a Christian fellowship near his university. Now two years later, he has become a vibrant Christian who diligently evangelizes friends and classmates.

This is just one of Bylsma's many stories. He and his wife Jean live in Cobourg, Ont., but most of his evangelistic work is done overseas – on the phone, on Skype, via email or in person.

Unaffiliated with any organization, Bylsma has reached out to international university students for almost 30 years, sowing the seeds of the gospel in genera-

al and of Dooyeweerd in particular in as many countries as he can. He's been to 39 so far.

Bylsma has spent 12 summers in China, travelling extensively and laying the groundwork for that phone call. In 2012, he journeyed for two months through 11 Asian countries. Emails to his home church were peppered with anecdotes like eating steamed grass carp belly at the prestigious Hong Kong Jockey Club, being pressured to bribe Cambodian border guards and attending a Muslim circumcision feast in rural Bangladesh. Among other things, Bylsma encouraged an automotive engineer from Inner Mongolia to pursue a Reformational worldview, put an Asian dissident labour leader in touch with the CLAC and lectured 500 students at a Christian university in Myanmar (Burma) about relationships.

All of life matters

This one-man, mentoring-style mission work began with Bylsma's retirement almost 30 years ago. In 1983, after a career as a teacher, group home director and part-time real estate agent, Bylsma took a course in computer programming and became friends with several international students. His talent for connecting with individuals – on trains, in bookstores, at universities – quickly grew into an international network that he makes use of to attract as many people as possible to what he calls a "diamond perspective" on life.

"This many-sided biblical worldview," he explains, "stimulates me to take a genuine interest in others; to befriend atheists or agnostics and to love them to faith." He encourages his foreign friends to adopt a similar "diamond perspective," so that they will multiply this many-sided Kingdom shalom within their culture.

"There are many sides to living," he points out. "You cannot reduce any part of life to one side." He refers to the influence of Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd, who argued that humans need to be understood in terms of how they function in fifteen different modalities. These include, for instance, faith, ethical, economic, social, emotional and physical aspects. Dooyeweerd believed that in order for us humans to flourish in God's creation, we have to pay attention to "the diversity of ways in which we function in the world" (Herman Dooyeweerd:

Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society, Jonathan Chaplin). With that in mind, Bylsma tries to show that one's emotional, vocational, imaginative, and spiritual well-being, for example, are delicately intertwined. This multi-faceted view is an attractive one, especially in China, where students are pushed extremely hard to succeed academically, but end up struggling in other areas of life.

After discovering that international students readily opened up to him, Bylsma took three years of counseling courses at Tyndale College in Toronto. He started making more and more connections – in Venezuela, Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua. He taught English in China, thinking he could evangelize that way, but found the process too slow.

"There's a strong interest in Christianity in Asian countries, particularly in China," Bylsma says, "stronger than a decade ago. People in China are beginning to realize more and more that gathering possessions isn't automatically creating happiness. There's an emptiness, a spiritual and emotional and relational emptiness as they become wealthier. God says in his Word, 'When I bless you, make sure you don't leave me.' It's a challenge we face in the West too. Because we're so satisfied, we don't worry about Kingdom work so much anymore."

Reaching out online

Bylsma frequently wakes up at 4 a.m. to Skype with contacts in South Korea, China, Cambodia or Nepal. Right now he's chatting once a week with groups of high school students who want to practice English. Bylsma carries his laptop around the house to show them a Canadian home and winter scenes outside. He invites them to email him individually, which a dozen have done. He's now planning to follow up this outreach by mobilizing indigenous Christians to meet with these high school students.

"Even though I'm 75, I'm still excited about life," he says. "I see so much that can be done. We should die in the trenches, not on the beaches of Florida. We have to be much more excited about living before God."

By now, his networking style of outreach has become second nature. Recently, Bylsma was paying for gas at a local UltraMar station. When asked, the attend-

ant said that he came from the Punjab. "Oh, northern India?" Bylsma replied. "I've been in India too." The young man immediately wanted to know more, so the two exchanged email addresses and the following week sat down to talk about their experiences.

"When we are really interested in getting to know people," Bylsma says, "it becomes easy to make all kinds of connections."

Dooyeweerd said that life cannot be reduced to a single aspect, but must be seen in the interactive complexity of aspects of God's reality. This is especially important for those working in academics. Similarly, the individual must be understood in the light of the relationships, organizations and institutions that shape him. Within this comprehensive framework, Bylsma gets to know people all around the world, helps them to understand themselves better in relation to God and others, seeks to inspire them with a keen Kingdom vision and encourages them to live out the many-sided gospel more faithfully and fervently.

Underestimating our own heritage

It's a message that Christian Reformed churches in Canada need to hear too. "Many of our pastors," Bylsma says, "tend to acclimatise us to the present culture rather than challenge us to understand it more prophetically and to seek enthusiastic ways of reforming this degenerating culture. We are lacking an exciting holistic life vision and are quickly becoming a rather bland, generic kind of Christian denomination that fails to nourish its vital Reformational root system that can regenerate our valuable biblical heritage. "It is time that we begin zeroing in a bit more on the overall denominational drift than on the numerous agency minutiae. Without an inspiring, captivating life vision, more and more of our people will eventually perish."

"We need to give our young people the right tools to practise their faith in all areas of life. We need to inspire in them an exciting vision that provides clear life-direction, that firmly actualizes their faith in all areas of their existence, and that earnestly fires them up to attract others to Kingdom shalom."



Megachurch in Busan, South Korea.

Angela Reitsma Bick is editor of Christian Courier and lives in Barrie, Ont.